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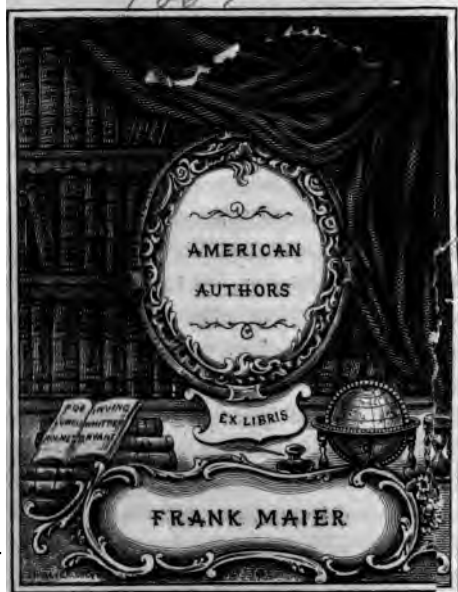
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GIAFAR AL BARMEKI,

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A T A L E

OF THE

COURT OF HAROUN AL RASCHID.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

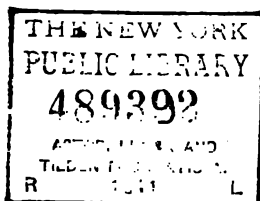
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P R E F A C E.

THE incident upon which the following narration is based, first fell under the author's eye while hastily perusing D'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*. It may be found in that entertaining and instructive epitome of Eastern history and manners, under the article "*Abassa*;" by referring to which, the reader will discover that, excepting in a single particular, historical truth has been strictly adhered to in the work now presented to his notice.

GIAFAR AL BARMEKI.

CHAPTER I.

“ Their feet had trod the burning sand
Of lone Arabia’s desert land,
Obedient to the will Divine
To kneel at Mecca’s holy shrine ;
And kingly lips have press’d the sod,
Where knelt the prophet of their God.”

ALL that vast plain, which is enclosed and watered by those celebrated rivers of antiquity, the Euphrates and the Tigris, hence called by the ancients Mesopotamia, and since, for the same reason, named by the Arabians AL GEZIRA, or *The Island*, is a desolate, and to the eye an almost boundless desert. Few roam over its bosom, save the hardy Arab, to whom habit has rendered its terrors harmless ; the plodding merchant, with his well-laden camels, bartering safety and quiet for sweet gain ; or perchance the solitary pilgrim, seeking or returning from the holy city, and with a devotion worthy a purer faith, sustaining with

patience, or confronting with fearlessness, the privations and dangers of that perilous journey.

In the year of the Hegira one hundred and eighty-five, a band of travellers, far different in outward garb and numbers from either just mentioned, might have been seen crossing westwardly this plain, a few hours' journey below Bagdad. Their way was toilsome and weary. It lay over a waste of glazed and shining sand, that reflected with redoubled power the meridian rays which a summer's sun was pouring down upon their path. Light winds breathed occasionally from the west, cooling the sultry air of the desert. Yet grateful as was their refreshing influence, they often became the sources of serious annoyance; for when increased beyond even a moderate degree of violence, they raised the dust in clouds, covering the shrinking forms of the travellers with a shower of its heated and penetrating particles. Indeed, the bosom of a summer's lake is not more easily ruffled by the breeze, than is the surface of that unstable soil agitated and blown abroad by the currents of wind which stream across it.

On all sides was extended an even plain of sand, its monotony varied only by an occasional group of palm trees, some mound of ancient ruins, or heaps of loose soil blown into waves, where "the north wind and the south had weaved the twisted sand." Far behind might be seen the majestic Euphrates, winding its slow and serpentine way across the plain. Before them, marking the course

of the river Tigris, stretched a strip of date trees, with which were intermingled the bay and juniper, while here and there were scattered the beautiful andrachne, enlivening, with its bright red bark and gay flowers, the dark foliage with which it was surrounded.

Shining through the trees was seen the Arrow,* as it is poetically called, hurrying along its swift current, remarkable for the light colour of its waters. Beyond the river, commenced again the vast desert, bounded to the north and west by the snow-clad mountains of Khourdistan.

Two rode foremost of the train, who from their dress and bearing seemed its leaders. They were mounted upon choice Arabian horses, which, though somewhat deficient in size, possessed in a remarkable degree that fleetness and endurance so necessary in an animal to whose powers man's life is oft intrusted, over those wild and dangerous wastes.

After these, seated upon camels, rode a small but venerable band. Their faces, which seemed in gravity and sagacity to rival those of the patient animals which they bestrode, their flowing white beards, reaching below their girdles, and their robes of blue, proclaimed them dervises.

Next followed fourscore horsemen, splendidly arrayed. The bright mail which they wore was in part shielded from the sun's rays by robes of

* The Tigris, so called from the Persian teir, (arrow.)

crimson silk, that were fastened about their waists with rich girdles of the same material. Suspended at their saddle bows might be seen their shining bonnets of steel, whose places were for the time supplied by red silken turbans, whence the name which in after times they acquired of Kezel Bash, (red heads.) Loose trousers, of a light yellow or buff colour, tied closely about the ankle, and richly embroidered sandals, completed their apparel.

Their weapons were a long lance, borne or poised in the right hand, a crooked cimeter suspended from the girdle, and a longer but straight sword which lay across the saddle under the right thigh. In addition to these, each wore at his girdle in front a short poniard, the hilt of which was richly set with jewels, a weapon more for ornament than utility, although occasionally it might be serviceable in close encounter, or redeem the life of a prostrate warrior.

Their horses were of the Turcoman breed. Scarcely inferior in speed and hardiness to those above described, they moved with that proud step and loftiness of carriage, which in the war horse is a quality so desirable and imposing. They possessed also size and strength, sufficient to support with ease, and display to advantage, the sumptuous and even cumbrous furniture which they were accustomed to bear. The reins by which they were guided were embroidered with silk, and enriched with jewels of different kinds and value, such as pearls, rubies, turquoises, or emeralds, as

the fancy of the rider prompted, or his means permitted him. Attached to the saddle bow of each warrior were a hammer and nail, both of gold,¹ with which, upon dismounting, they fastened the bridle of their steeds to the ground; for in the deserts which they often traversed, no tree or shrub was to be found which might answer a purpose so necessary.

Their large saddles, though imposing in appearance, seemed inconvenient for close array, and unwieldy for nice and rapid evolution, objections which were equally applicable to their immensely broad stirrups.

They were matched in height and nearly so in years. The sun, in its course from China's wall to the great empire of Charlemagne, looks not upon another such array of horsemen. They were a portion of the body guard of Haroun al Raschid. At their head that renowned monarch had decided the fortune of many a hard-fought day; with their powerful aid he had oft snatched victory from the arms of defeat, and rendered his name terrible to the foes of Islamism.

Next came a band of black eunuchs, dressed in white, with shawls of India girded around their waists, and bracelets and collars of gold, marks of splendid slavery, richly contrasting with the pure jet of their skins. Each held in his right hand a naked cimeter, of the most polished and highly tempered material, and the scabbards, which hung

¹ See notes at the end of the volume.

empty at their sides, were of pure gold, highly en-chased, and wrought by the most skilful artisans. In addition to these, sheathless poniards slept at their girdles.

After these followed by far the fairest and most interesting portion of the train. They were concealed in palanquins, a species of litter, suspended between two camels, and shaded by a canopy of fine brocade, which was borne along by the arms of eight brawny slaves. These served alike to shield the fair creatures they enclosed from the scorching influence of the sun, and to defend them from the rude glances of man, both equally dreaded by those who have the care of beauty in those burning and jealous climes. There was nothing in the external appearance of these moving prisons, for such indeed they appeared, to strike the beholder with interest, though they seemed framed with every regard to the comfort of their lovely occupants. Yet, in truth, one glance behind the drapery of those curtained walls were worth the whole array of splendour that has been described.

Camels laden with provisions, and all the accoutrements necessary for a long and painful journey, slaves with led horses, straggling pilgrims who had joined the train for safety, thronged in succession upon the road, while a band of well-appointed horsemen brought up the rear.

There is something strange and incongruous about this party, this mingling of women, priests, and warriors. What do they here, travelling the

sultry desert? Pilgrims they are, returning from the sacred city of Mecca. They have paid their adorations at the shrine of the Kaaba.³ They have drunk of the holy well Zemzem, whose waters a watchful angel disclosed to the weeping Hagar, when the father of their race lay a thirsting infant in the wilderness. Purified from sin, they are returning to their homes, filled with high thoughts of the goodness of Allah and the sacred duties of religion, but soon again to enter upon the busy world, that theatre of sin, that scene of crime and sorrow.

The elder of the two warriors who headed the train was about forty years of age. His appearance was noble and majestic. His broad expanded forehead seemed the seat of strong intellectual powers; and piercing black eyes, which shot their sharp flashes from underneath pent, overhanging brows, indicated correctly the vigour and vivacity of their owner's character. About the corners of his eyes were many wrinkling lines, marks which indulged merriment had left imprinted there; and when he laughed, which he often did in mirth, but oftener in scorn, from amid the mask of a coal-black beard were disclosed teeth of a pearly whiteness, which added not a little to the comeliness of his appearance.

There were but few marks about the dress of this individual which denoted his rank, nor was the presence of these necessary to assure the spectator of his high station and character. Royalty had stamped its impress upon his commanding fea-

tures; his port and mien proclaimed him at once a monarch. The same also did a cluster of priceless jewels which sparkled in his turban. These told what, but not who he was. There were, however, some tokens about his person, which declared the individuality, as well as the rank of their wearer. One, and the principal of these, was a plain cimeter, of large size and singular shape, which hung at his side. It was the far-famed Samsamah,³ a weapon of fabulous renown, as celebrated throughout the Eastern world as the good sword Joyeuse in the West, for the prodigies it had wrought in the hands of his rival and cotemporary Charlemagne. Another of these was the casque which was suspended at his saddle bow, upon which were engraved the words HAGGION AZZON, (*Strong is the pilgrim's arm.*) The bearer of that helmet and sword was Haroun al Raschid. Friends knew them well, and in the darkness of battle foes had often read the motto upon that crest by the light of that flashing blade. In addition to these, and with equal clearness, the discipline and gallant equipment of his followers disclosed the title of their leader. They wore, as it were, the livery of that just, that generous, that heroic calif.

His companion was many years younger. He was well formed, and possessed a fine and impressive countenance. Richly dressed, strikingly dignified, perhaps haughty in all his actions, he seemed born to command; yet in his deportment towards the calif he almost practised the servility of a slave.

"It is indeed so, Giafar," said the Commander of the Faithful to his companion. "The toils of a journey such as we have accomplished, were well repaid by that self-approbation, that confidence in the Divine favour, which are inspired by the performance of a duty so sacred, did these feelings endure. But how flattering are they! How soon will sin and passion weigh down and deaden these bosoms, which are now so light, so fresh, so free from sorrow!"

"Life," replied the vizier, (for such was his rank,) "in its ordinary round of business and enjoyment, brings to us trials too strong for our resistance; and when to these are superadded the temptations of rank, its pleasures and its cares, what wonder is there if at times its possessor fails in some part of those high duties which he owes to Heaven?"

"Better to part, then, with crown and kingdom," said the calif, "if to do thus would give a title worth more than that of king. Honour and power are 'light as an insect's wing,' and he that seeks and values them is lighter still than they. When I put off these garments, and clothed myself with the sacred veil, I felt as though I had left with them all sin and care. I fear, lest with the ornaments of my rank I may have taken up pride and ambition, or cruelty with my steel sword."

"Shadow of God upon earth," replied the vizier, moved by the earnestness with which the calif had addressed him, "these are not the days of the

prophets. Holy men there are dwelling here below, who have in some part attained that purity to which we are commanded to aspire. But who is perfect, who is free from frailty and passion? The duties of thy sacred office are arduous—”

“Too much so for mortal,” interrupted the calif.

“Our blessed Prophet,” continued the vizier, “(upon whom be salvation and the peace of God,) alone has perfectly sustained them. Why, then, should thy soul reproach thee, if thou bendest under a burden which no mortal save him could support? If thou failest in aught, there are prayers, alms, fasting, and, above all, the sacred pilgrimage, to atone for thine errors, and purify thee before the Most High.”

“True, true; thy words are balm to me, Giafar,” exclaimed the monarch. “And to scatter the foes of our holy religion, to extend its proffers to those wretches who are destitute of its blessings, merits not this somewhat?”

“Much, nay, more than all,” replied the vizier; “for says not the Koran, ‘Do ye reckon the giving of drink to pilgrims, and the visiting the holy temple, to be actions as meritorious as those performed by him, who believeth in God, and in the last day, and fighteth for the religion of the Most High?’”

“Thou hast rightly spoken,” said the calif. “And well pleased am I, if with this arm I can accomplish aught to the benefit of our most holy religion, or which may redound to the glory of its

blessed author. Five times have I worshipped at Mecca, (peace dwell within its walls !) and as often have I routed mine enemies in the field. Never have I returned from this sacred journey, but Heaven has had work for me to do."

"It hath strangely chanced," exclaimed the vizier.

"Out upon thy lack of faith!" replied the calif. "The decrees of Allah are from eternity, and concerning the smallest matter chance has no power."

"The arm of the high priest of our religion is strong, and the foes of Islamism may well tremble at its might; but if thou hadst never clothed thyself with a pilgrim's garments, if thou hadst never bowed before the shrine visited by true believers, wouldst thou shun the enemy and the oppressor? No; thou wouldst head thy brave warriors, and with myself at thy side, charge the infidels as thou art wont."

"I should! I should!" exclaimed the calif. "By the beard of Abbas! my bosom is warming at the thought." Then checking himself he added, "Ever ready is the proud soul of man, to take upon himself the merit of his good deeds. But it becomes thee not, Giafar, to stand like a tempter at my side, encouraging those feelings, which now at least should be steadily repressed. There is no strength in this arm, save as it comes from the Most High. His blessing be upon us."

As he said this, the royal pilgrim dismounted

from his horse, and turning his face towards the holy city, bowed himself with the deepest humility to the earth, while he paid his adorations to the Supreme. His companion followed his example, and many of the train, pausing upon their way, recited short verses from the Koran, or the profession of their faith, and from the lips of all were heard breaking, "God is good ! God is great !" and other expressions of devotional feeling.

With such emotions had the band described, or most of the individuals composing it, proceeded upon their route from Mecca. As they approached Bagdad, however, the thoughts of home, and its expected pleasures, projected plans for business and intrigue, were fast infringing upon those bosoms, which had of late been tenanted and rendered sacred by devotion. Instead of a continual sense of duty, there were long and frequent intervals in their fidelity to Heaven, from which they were only aroused at the hour of prayer, or at the exhortation of some good imam. The torch seemed to burn with an unsteady flame, its uncertain and flickering light soon to be entirely extinguished under a mass of joys, anxieties, and all the varied passions that crowd upon the soul. Thus many leave the temple of God, awed by the sanctity of the place, or awakened by the impressive performance of the holy rites. Their hearts are, for the moment, filled with awe and devotion, but as their steps lead them farther and farther from the place

where these emotions have been engendered, with diminished power do they linger in their bosoms, until the cares, or yet sooner the joys of earth, have banished afar all thoughts of heaven.

CHAPTER II.

This world of tents, and domes, and sun-bright armory !
Princely pavilions, screen'd by many a fold ;
Steeds with their housings of rich silver spun,
Their chains and poytrels glittering in the sun ;
And camels, tufted o'er with Yemen's shells,
Shaking in every breeze their light-toned bells.

Lalla Rookh.

THE route of the travellers had led them over the ruins of ages. The path which they had traversed was strewn with the monuments of years long past. Many a scene of desolation was crossed, which spoke with emphasis of the instability of fortune, and told the vanity of this world's greatness more forcibly to the pilgrims, than the most impressive chapter of the Koran.

On the banks of the "great river," the river Euphrates, they had trodden and wondered amid the ruins of ancient Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." In

the plain of Shinar, they had gazed upon the remains of Babel's ancient tower, that enduring monument of human presumption; and if some had a tear for the wickedness of mankind, many too had a smile for their folly. For to them who could view afar the mountains of Khourdistan, lifting their proud summits into that heaven which the vain builders had aspired to reach, it seemed strange indeed that they should have reared their place of refuge upon a plain so level and so low. Occasionally their march was interrupted by an aqueduct or trench, vestiges of Grecian or of Roman industry, through which the waters of the higher bed of the Euphrates mingled with those of its rival stream, irrigating the parched and sandy soil through which it found a passage. Hardly a step was taken but the foot trod upon some new wonder, furnishing theme for admiration, and food for serious and sage discourse.

Turning northwardly, they now followed the course of the Tigris, passing upon the right hand the ruins of Seleucia, whose rise had in a great measure contributed to the desolation of that immense city just spoken of. Upon the opposite bank of the river, were the site and vestiges of the Ctesiphon of the Parthians, which had in its turn avenged the wrongs of Babylon upon the abode of the Macedonian Seleucus, and on its ruins were crumbling the ruins of Persian Modain. Yet amid this scene of desolation, one proud edifice was seen rearing itself above the scattered remnants of

antiquity. It was the palace of Khoshroes Nourshivan, standing untouched, uninjured by the withering hand of time, which even to this day, if travellers' tales be true, has respected its venerable walls. "Time spares the works of the just man," says the proverb; "for see! the palace of Nourshivan still stands amid the ruins of Modain."

This lofty structure was visible upon the horizon's edge, looming like an immense pile through the heated and refracting atmosphere of the desert. A forest of gigantic trees seemed to surround it, for so were magnified the stunted shrubs that skirted the plain, a delusion not uncommon in eastern countries about midday.

The calif pointed out the scene to his vizier, and sighing profoundly, said,

"There, Giafar, is a name worth living for; the power of the mightiest, the glory of the most warlike, sink into nothing before that title, 'The Just.' I would part with my whole kingdom to possess it."

"'Tis thine, my lord," replied the vizier. "Al Raschid* need not envy the fame of mortal."

"Thou flatterest me, Giafar," said the monarch. "My subjects have indeed bestowed upon me that title, but shall I leave behind me a memorial of my works, lasting as those walls?"

"Doubt it not, my most noble master," said the vizier. "Ages must pass away, ere the great, the just Haroun shall be forgotten; ere he shall cease

* The Just.

to be an example for princes, or his name fade from the memory of mankind."

"Could I believe as thou wouldst fain persuade me," replied the monarch, "did I think that this fair fame were indeed mine, willingly would I resign my crown into other hands. I should fear lest some unwary action, prompted by passion or by pride, might in a moment tarnish my renown, and blacken its fair surface. And yet," he added, after a moment's hesitation, "it may not be. The burden is fastened upon my shoulders, I must carry it to the journey's end."

A short silence ensued, which was broken by Haroun.

"The hours of this pilgrimage have passed pleasantly away. Accompanied by thee, by my wife Zobeide, and my daughter, whom I love as a jewel of great price, they have equalled the most delightful moments of the harem, nay, have surpassed them, for thou hast participated in their enjoyment. It may be we have sinned in this, for in the pilgrim pleasure should give place to feelings of penitence and humility—Allah, pardon our offences!—yet I grieve that they are so soon to end. Dost thou not regret it, Giafar?"

"I can never forget them, my lord," said the young prince, slightly colouring; "they will be to me like a dream, which haunts the mind of the sleeper long after the slumber has passed away, that brought the sweet vision to his senses."

"All happiness seems a dream," said the calif.

"Our misfortunes alone appear to be realities. The happiest hours are as though they were not, but the passage of misfortune over the soul leaves imprinted there its traces, and we cannot doubt the reality of those ills, over which we still grieve. How I shall wish for thee, Giafar, after our return ! It is true, I shall see thee in the divan of council, and at the chase ; I shall find thee at my side in the thick fight, or before me, it may chance—nay, thou hast been often there ; we may roam together the streets of the city, watching over the morals and manners of my people, but in my hours of retirement, I shall look for thee in vain. In the sacred retreat of the harem thou canst not enter. I would it were otherwise."

Signs of joy were visible in the countenance of the vizier, as he listened to these expressions of his master's affection, and more than once he would have pressed his lips to the hem of his robe, but as often the hand of the calif restrained him. "Away with these vain ceremonies !" he exclaimed, "these forms with which my rank surrounds me—I am weary of them. Be a brother to me—yet not so," he added as his mind reverted to the past. "They are false and treacherous. A son, perhaps—but now leave me. I would be alone. See if the princesses are well attended. The sun yet shines burning, and the covering of a travelling pavilion is not like the spreading roof, and latticed windows of their own home. This must be cared for. They may need repose ere entering the city."

Joyfully did Prince Giafar turn to execute the commands of his master. He hastened to the litter which contained the beautiful Zobeide. A sign from her mute attendant warned him that she slept, and he passed on to that which bore the Princess Abassa. Reining up his steed, he hesitated as though fearful of disturbing the fair being therein concealed, and then, in a voice which respect and timidity rendered scarce audible, inquired if she were not weary, and then proposed that the caravan should halt, while they took a few moments' rest.

A slight agitation of the curtains was seen, a rustling as of silken garments heard, and then a voice of surpassing melody said, "Thanks to the kind care of our protectors, we feel no weariness, and need no repose. I think, indeed, we but ill obey the precepts of our most holy Prophet. Little of toil or danger do we encounter, no self-denial do we practise in our pilgrimage, but thou, Prince Giafar, and my beloved father, ye merit indeed the blessing of Allah. Daring danger, enduring fatigue, ye wish, as it were, from Heaven, forgiveness of your sins."

"Think not, lady," said the pirnec, "that bodily penance can atone for error. The venerable men who precede us would tell you far otherwise. The strong in frame might endure suffering, under which the weak powers would sink, yet one act of true devotion, a single tear of sorrow and repentance, from a being like thee, would outweigh it all!"

"Is self-privation nothing?" replied the princess. "Merits not more he who in poverty, on foot, and alone, dares the fatigues and dangers of this desert, than one who, surrounded by comforts, and in all ease crosses its perilous road?"

"Poverty and misfortune," said the prince, "when supported with a humble spirit, chasten the soul, and render it deserving of reward. 'Happy,' says the Koran, 'are they who from the bosom of poverty cry out, We are the children of God, we shall return to him.' But pride and self-esteem are as often covered by the rags of the beggar, as by the robe of the prince. Vanity and desire for this world's favour are often mingled with the performance of our holiest duties, taking from their worth, and diminishing the merit which they otherwise would find in the eyes of Heaven. How often does the pilgrim put on the ihram* from motives ill befitting the sacredness of his calling, that he may obtain the respect of mankind, that the venerable name of hadgi† may be his, when his soul should be wrapped in devotion, and all his care, how he best might worship Heaven, and deserve forgiveness for his sins."

"Will my lord permit me to inquire," said the princess, "in what manner he has performed those duties which have led him to the sacred city?"

"Question me not, noble princess," answered Giafar; "a lesson of virtue, it is easy to read, but most difficult to practise. My obligations to reli-

* The mantle of the pilgrim.

† Pilgrim.

gion have been fulfilled, as best I could, but there are thoughts that cannot be banished, images which perpetually haunt the imagination, and enter per force into the soul, even when religion, Heaven, and all things sacred are claiming its entire possession."

"Thy thoughts, then, have been away in Bagdad, with thy friends at home?"

"Not so, fairest princess," was the hesitating reply. "With the steps of thy camels they have crossed the desert by day, and at night have stood sentinels before thy tent until the morning." The voice of the young prince faltered as he spoke, and a sigh, unheard by him, agitated the silken covering which hid from his sight the loveliest creature that the realm of Persia contained.

Silence ensued, and the train moved noiselessly upon its course.

"Prince!"

"I am at thy side, fair lady."

"How far distant is Bagdad?"

"A few short hours' ride. Thou mayst soon see its towers. The Tigris rolls its waters upon our right, and the bright sun is shining upon a scene which thou wouldst love to look upon."

A fair hand parted the curtain of the pavilion, and Abassa, veiled, looked forth. At this moment, having passed a bend in the river, the city appeared full in view, with its gilded domes, its towers, and minarets, flashing afar like a "grove of waving cimeters."

"That, then, is Bagdad?" said Abassa.

"It is," was the reply. "You may distinguish hence your father's palace, for it rears itself above the loftiest domes of the city."

"I see a mass of towers and clustered walls, but can discern nothing distinctly. Yet what are those?" said the princess; and she pointed out to Giafar, as she spoke, a range of low tents which were extended beyond them, upon the border of the river.

"I had overlooked them," replied the vizier. "By Allah! they are warriors encamped. I can discern the glittering of their armour, and, as I live, the Roman eagle flutters over their tents. I know that standard well. In the name of the Prophet! what can this mean? I had thought as soon to see heaven and earth meet, as that boastful bird take its flight over these plains. Surely thy father must have seen them, and yet we move steadily along."

"Go to him," exclaimed the princess. "Be near him, warn him of the danger."

"Danger!" replied the vizier, proudly, "there is none. We have naught to fear from those Christian dogs. They have felt, too often, the edge of our cimeters, to dare their temper again. Fear nothing. I will seek thy father, and instantly return." He bowed to his horse's mane, and turned to depart.

The princess gazed steadily upon the encampment which had caused such dismay in her own

mind, and such wonder on the part of her companion, and she heeded not that the light airs which, at intervals, hovered over them, had blown aside the veil which she wore, and that she was displaying beauties unparalleled to the gaze of the enraptured prince. She was leaning forward, peering into the distance. One white hand held back the curtain of the tent, while, with the other, she was shading her fine features from the rays of the sun. Both, as became her rank, were covered with jewels. The nails of her fingers were, at their roots, tinged with henna, not after the present unseemly fashion of the country, but so delicately, as would scarcely offend the taste of those most unused to the custom. Her dark brown hair, notwithstanding the restraint of a richly worked buckle, or species of tiara, fell in luxuriance upon her shoulders, while in front it was simply parted, and enveloped, in the form of a double crescent, her finely formed forehead. Glittering upon her brow, and half concealed by this arrangement of her tresses, shone a superb diamond, which had once sparkled in the hair of the Empress Irene. Her eyes were of a deep hazel colour, and their lids were fringed with long eyelashes, that imparted to them a soft and melting expression. These were painted with a sort of black unguent or collyrium, whose dark surface softened the rays of light in their passage to the eye, to which delicate organ they would else have been intolerable, reflected, as at times they were, from a sea

of shining sand. Her nose was slightly aquiline ; her mouth small and arched, like the bow of the Grecian cupid ; her chin was that of a sculptured statue, perfectly formed, slightly projecting and dimpled. She was agitated, trembling, and the colour had left her cheeks ; but the hand of beauty had moulded her features, and, with curious cunning, had there combined all the pride of her rank, with the softness of her sex.

More of her person than has been described was not visible, nor even this but at intervals, as the wind waved to and fro her veil of silk and gold. Yet more was not necessary to entrance the young prince. One action, and that involuntary, arrested the progress of his steed, which he had already urged upon the road, and then, as though touched by an enchanter's wand, he became motionless, and gazed upon her in silent and breathless admiration. Save the beautiful object before him, everything disappeared from his sight : his companions, the hostile encampment, the world, all but her. His own, and the exertions of his horse, in keeping the way seemed involuntary, or at least unnoticed by him. He heeded not the approach of a slave, who drew near with hurried steps, and was aroused only by the voice of Abassa exclaiming, " A messenger from my father. He has seen them, then, at last."

Turning as she said this, her eyes encountered those of the prince, which were fastened in rapture upon her unveiled features. Blushes covered her

face as with a veil of crimson; an upbraiding, "Nay! my lord," came from her lips, and she hastily drew back into the solitude of her tent.

"Pardon, fairest princess, thine erring slave. His life is ready to atone for his error." No answer was returned, and by this time the slave was at his side, and signified to him that the calif desired his presence. Giafar loosed his rein, and in a moment was at his master's side.

"Well, Giafar," exclaimed the calif, "what new wonder have we here?"

"In truth, my lord," replied the vizier, "it is a riddle that I cannot read. They are Romans doubtless, as one may know by their array; but it passes my skill to say what should bring the knaves hither."

"Have we not wandered from the road, Giafar, and are we not approaching unwillingly some hostile city?"

"There flows the Tigris, yonder glitter the crescents upon the mosques of Bagdad, and there—"

"'Tis enchantment! Ride on—ride on," said the calif, gayly, "within a lance's length, and they will vanish."

"Hold! my lord, one moment," exclaimed the prince. "Were it not well, ere we advance, to send a messenger, and demand their purpose?"

"Bear the message, then, thyself," interrupted the monarch, with a scornful laugh. "Go—ask of those infidels, if the lord of the land upon which

they have set their tents may enter in peace into his own city?"

"We have in our charge, sire, treasures that surpass those of the East."

"Can we not guard them? Whither has flown thy pride, Giafar? Has the air of Arabia rusted thy cimeter, or hast thou left thy courage as well as sins at the holy temple?"

"Neither, my lord," said the prince. "My courage is undiminished, and my blade bright, as the foe shall see, when thou commandest me to draw it. But let us take some precautions for the safety of the princesses, ere we seek the encounter. It cannot be doubted but they far outnumber us."

"Were they ten to one," said the monarch, "I would not pause upon my path. And would to Heaven, that not only these treasures, but my crown and life, depended upon an encounter with those knaves!—their empire being equally at stake."

"As thou wilt, my lord," said the vizier. "It is thine to command."

"Ride on, then, in the Prophet's name."

At this moment their attention was directed to a cloud of dust far off upon the plain which stretched itself between them and the city. It approached rapidly. "Behold!" said the prince, "a messenger from my father."

"It is thy brother Fadhel, as I think," said Haroun. "None but one of his far-famed Kochlani could speed so fast."

In a few moments the individual in question was

in sight. He came dashing along upon an Arabian of uncommon beauty, until within a few feet of the calif's person, when, with the skill of a practised horseman, he arrested his steed in mid career, and a fine-looking man in the prime of life dismounted, and prostrated himself before the Commander of the Faithful. "Welcome, most mighty sovereign," he exclaimed. "Lord of the East, welcome to thy slaves."

"Rise, Fadhel, rise," said the calif. "How fares thy good father? How fares the city? Nay, rise, keep us not from the path." Having kissed the hem of his master's robe, he rose, embraced his brother Giafar, then mounted and rode on. "Thou entertainest new guests during our absence," said the monarch.

"They are ambassadors from Constantinople, my lord."

"Ambassadors are they?" rejoined the calif, in a tone of disappointment; "they had near met with a rude reception. I should have liked to rouse the dogs. But is this thy hospitality? Couldst thou afford no better bestowal for the messengers of a mighty sovereign than these rude tents?"

"'Twas a precaution of my venerable father's, to lodge them without the city," was the reply. "Their numbers are greater than should come upon an errand of peace, and some brawl with our jealous citizens were sure to occur during thine absence. If they are true soldiers, they will not grumble at their rude quarters."

"Should they do this, then, let them ever come with messages of peace. They are sent from the Empress Irene, thou sayst?"

"'Tis rumoured, sire, that the empress is dead, and that they bring terms of peace from the new emperor."

"Ha! to renew the treaty, most like; to purchase a continuance of our friendship by a continuance of the tribute. Report says this, does it not?"

"Rumours come flying in upon us like the winds, yet in truth, my lord, I have not heard of this."

"Not heard of this?" replied the Commander of the Faithful, impatiently. "Be not so careful of thy news. Speak out; what hast thou heard of?"

"The most common rumour is, (and yet it is but rumour,) that the purpose of this embassy is to refuse the tribute on the part of the new emperor."

A frown darkened the calif's features for a moment; then smiling sternly he exclaimed,

"Say they so, then? and does the Christian dog howl after this sort? He needs the lash, and, by the beard of my father! he shall feel it." This was said in a tone of bitterness, that told how near the calif's heart lay the subject on which he spoke, and with what pious fervour he hated and despised the enemies of his faith.

They had by this time approached the tents of the Roman embassy. Clusters of arms and heaps of armour were piled around the encampment;

horses were standing picketed near, but not a warrior was visible. Overcome by the severe heat of the climate, they were reposing within their tents, sunk in a state of lassitude, from which the approach of the pilgrim band could hardly arouse them. At last one, and then another, looked forth, until numerous unarmed and half-armed knights were gazing with ill-concealed wonder at the gallant array which passed them.

"Where are these warriors," exclaimed the calif, "who would threaten us so boldly? Our very sun seems to have subdued them. Ha! they look out upon us at last. Giafar, see that the men move cheerily and firmly on. Tell them that the eyes of infidels are upon them."

The march was toilsome. The yielding sand covered at each step the foot of man and beast. The ardent sun shone with a hue of blood, and though well past the meridian, poured down rays that were withering in their power, tinging with red the dull vapour of the desert, until the very atmosphere glowed as if on fire. The air was calm, yet occasionally gusts of wind came from the southern waste like the breath of a heated furnace, bearing along particles of fine dust or heated sand, which at times forced the hardest warrior to conceal his face beneath his robe, though oftener he received them upon his averted back, shrinking yet unbent. But at a word from the vizier all toil was forgotten. Each rode more erect in his saddle and grasped his lance more firmly, or poised it

with lighter hand ; and the thought that foes were gazing on them seemed to inspire their very steeds. Fresh slaves bore the pavilions which shaded the princesses and their attendants, so that even their wearisome duty was performed with alacrity.

This gallant sight seemed to have roused the strangers. Many were seen to don their armour, and, as though rebuked of their indolence, a few rode forth, to scan more minutely their array, and for some time hovered upon the borders of their march. Yet no glance was bestowed upon them, unless the characteristic curiosity of their sex may have urged some tenant of those curtained litters to look stealthily forth upon the strangers. In all that band of warriors, not a face was averted, not a feature moved, not a hand was raised to wipe away the moisture which might be seen dripping plentifully from their brows. To the eyes of their wondering observers, they seemed stern and panoramic statues, borne along by the aid of some invisible machinery ; to such perfection had their discipline been brought, and with such devotion were they wont to observe the commands of their leader.

"The drones have roused themselves at last," said Haroun. "In truth a goodly swarm. What reason, Fadhel, do they allege for coming in such numbers upon a peaceful errand?"

"The fear of robbers, and wandering Tartars, my lord," was the reply.

"Out upon the dogs!" exclaimed the monarch.

"No robbers tread within the confines of my kingdom, save themselves. No, 'tis a pretext false and flimsy. The emperor would intimidate me by the splendour of his array, by the number and excellence of his troops. Ha! by my life, but they shall quail before my throne. Giafar, see that no splendour be wanting to the reception of these Romans. Let the remembrance of their master's court be driven from their minds, and sink into insignificance when compared with mine."

"It shall be done, my lord," replied the prince; "thine enemies shall tremble before thee. Confusion shall cover their faces in thy presence."

The calif now relapsed into silence, which was uninterrupted, until, at about nightfall, they entered the city.

CHAPTER III.

Why comes he not? his steeds are fleet,
Nor shrink they from the summer heat.

Giaour.

BAGDAD, the once favourite residence of the Abassidian califs, stands in a vast plain upon the banks of the Tigris. As described by ancient historians, it was built upon both sides of the river

and in form was perfectly circular. A double wall enclosed it, the gates of each of which were disposed alternately with respect to those of the other, whence it was sometimes called Zaura, or the oblique, an arrangement which added greatly to the security of the city's defences; for an enemy that by any chance had effected an entrance within the outer wall, was obliged to traverse some distance between the two, ere arriving at the inner gate, which before the city could be entered must still be forced, and that under circumstances very unfavourable to the accomplishment of such a purpose. In addition to this, lofty turrets overlooked the town on all sides.

The banks of the Tigris were adorned by the principal public buildings, and palaces of the most important citizens, which were partially concealed by the groves of palm and cypress trees, that grew in profusion along its margin. Moored fast in the river, rippling its current with their prows, were ranged a line of boats, over which was thrown a spacious bridge, that afforded free communication between the opposite portions of the city. In every quarter were seen objects worthy of note. Large and commodious caravansaries accommodated the traveller; rich merchandise of every description was displayed to view in its extensive bazaars; noble aqueducts and magnificent baths contributed to the convenience and luxury of its inhabitants. Many an ample mosque supported its lofty dome, upon whose height glittered the

symbol of the Moslem's faith ; tall minarets reared themselves in singular and fantastic beauty, and towering proudly above all these, in the eastern and more ancient part of the city, stood the imperial palace.

Founded by Abu Giafar al Mansor, the grandfather of the present monarch, it had, in the short space of half a century, become a splendid and flourishing metropolis, rivalling the great city of Constantine itself.

The ruins of ancient Ctesiphon are supposed to have contributed to the structure of Bagdad ; and, in truth, some ready storehouse of materials might seem necessary to account for the rapidity of its rise. But let a careful observer transport himself back to this city, before modern discovery had found a passage across the sea to either Indies, and all wonder and doubt will vanish from his mind. Its situation seemed adapted to render it one of the principal marts of commerce, between the eastern and western worlds ; and its rapid growth, its condition flourishing beyond example, justified the choice of its founder.

Gold and silver from the mountainous regions of northern India ; precious stones from Egypt and Hindostan ; pearls (an article of great commerce) from the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, as well as silks, spices, and frankincense, all found their way into this favoured city, and from her bosom by means of the ports lying upon the Mediterranean, were dispersed throughout the remote west.

Adorned by the liberality of a magnificent dynasty, its wealth and splendour were unrivalled, while the vigour of its government for a long time kept aloof that degeneracy, which might sooner have been expected, from the luxury and vices of its inhabitants. It has, however, since suffered those vicissitudes, which have been in so remarkable a degree the lot of the cities of Asia. The ancient capital of the califs is now no more. Its wealth and gorgeous magnificence have passed away. It has met the inevitable doom which stands recorded in the book of fate against all earthly grandeur, and Bagdad is now a small town upon the western bank of the Tigris, under the dominion of the race of Othman.

During the reign of Haroun al Raschid, Bagdad was at the height of its splendour. An experienced soldier, a determined foe to the enemies of Islamism, ready alike to defend and extend his dominions, the power of that monarch was respected if not feared throughout the world. From the time when he led his father's warriors to the gates of Constantinople, and imposed an annual tribute upon the trembling Empress of the Greeks, till now, victory seemed chained to his sword, and in the language of Eastern hyperbole, the kingdoms of the East lay concealed in his scabbard. Nor was the vigour of the calif's character felt less at home than abroad. Under his government, industry was protected, merit rewarded, vice and oppression promptly requited, and often with a punishment

fearfully disproportionate to the offence. But though his administration of justice was stern, and even cruel, yet it was equal. No tie of blood or friendship could arrest its course, and if his subjects feared the severity, they, at least, praised the impartiality of its execution. His enemies he spared not; he had himself been educated in a school of adversity; he had early taught himself to oppose the craft, and bear the cruelties of an ambitious brother, and he was not less ready to inflict, than he had been to endure, those evils which the vicissitudes of life impose upon the unfortunate.

In his private character, however, Haroun was generous, susceptible of friendship, and, above all, prone to pleasure and mirth. It was his delight to roam about his capital in some impenetrable disguise, accompanied by his favourite Giafar; to enjoy the merriment of some strange adventure, many of which are in Eastern tales recounted to us. Oftentimes he bandied jests with the careless idler, and heard his own name or actions the subject of innocent raillery, or drank of the wine cup with the licentious and jovial, while the erring Mohammeden little thought that the gay companion at his side was the chief imam of his religion. Sometimes the monarch left terrible traces of anger upon his path; yet oftener charmed by wit, or seduced by congenial merriment, he remembered the culprits only to favour or gently to reprove them.

Though war was the business of the monarch, and though pleasure charmed at times the man,

religion still had claims upon the pontiff, and its duties were not neglected. In the early days of the califate, to read the prayer of the mosque, to expound the Koran, and to lead the pilgrim to Mecca, were the duties of the vicar of the Prophet, as well as to combat at the head of the true believers in the field. These offices were performed by Haroun, with a readiness equal to that with which he discharged those more congenial to his temper. When in imminent danger from the power of his brother, he once offered up a vow, that if Allah would protect his servant from the dangers which surrounded him, on foot he would traverse the road to the holy city. His prayer was heard. The hand of God took his brother from the world, and Haroun ascended the throne of his fathers. Then turning a deaf ear to those courtiers who with more prudence than piety counselled him not to leave his newly acquired kingdom, he listened to the voice of the learned doctors of religion, divested himself of the ensigns of authority, and having consigned them into the hands of his trustiest servants, proceeded, clothed with the mantle of the hadgi, to the fulfilment of his holy vow. Nor was his piety unrewarded. "Eight times," says the historian, "he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and as often defeated his enemies in pitched battles;" a coincidence which impressed itself with such force upon the calif's mind, that he was said to attribute his success in arms to his numerous visits to the holy city. In a prince of

Haroun's abilities, it is probable that this was rather the result of policy than superstition, since his subjects would more willingly obey and more readily follow that monarch, whom they supposed to be under the immediate guidance of Heaven. It cannot be denied, however, that he was deeply imbued with the superstition of the age, and disdained not the assistance and direction of astrology, dreams, and omens, even in the execution of his most important enterprises.

During the present absence of the calif, the care and duties of the government were left in the hands of the venerable Jahia al Barmeki, a sage who had exercised the office of vizier under his father, and had been the guide of his own youth. His four sons in no way degenerated from the character of their father. With talents of a high order, they were endowed with the virtues of liberality and clemency, and although they filled the most desirable posts in the kingdom, envy itself was silent at seeing power in hands so worthy.

Of this favourite family, Giafar, the second son, was most dear to the calif. He had appointed him vizier, when his father's age prevented him from attending to the duties of that office, and upon his fidelity he reposed for the greater part of his reign. The young prince was well worthy the favour of his master. He possessed in a remarkable degree the qualifications necessary for that important post. Patient of labour, resolute in action, a remarkable coolness as well as decision

characterized his counsels and his deeds. Daily intercourse with the Commander of the Faithful had imparted a shade of sternness to his character while a long experience of the duties of prime minister, and the knowledge that he was accountable to a superior for his every action, had taught him prudence, and had taken from him, in a great degree, that impetuosity which, if it be the dower, is also often the bane of youth.

All that was rude in the composition of the young prince had been softened by education. He was versed in astrology, the study of the Koran, and all the learning of the East. The history and customs of the western world were not unknown to him, while in wit and song he rivalled the most celebrated poets of the age. It was not then a matter of wonder, that so valuable a servant, and so accomplished a friend, should occupy a high place in the calif's affection. Indeed such was his master's attachment to his vizier, that he rarely suffered himself to be deprived of his society, and on his present visit to Mecca with his favourite wife Zobeide, and his daughter Abassa, he had commanded the attendance of Giafar, having left the care of his kingdom in the hands of his venerable father.

After the calif's departure, nothing occurred to disturb the quiet and monotony of the city, until the arrival of an embassy from Constantinople. The private train of the ambassadors was superb and imposing, and a thousand chosen warriors

accompanied them; an escort necessary, they alleged, to protect their persons during a long and perilous journey.

The purpose of their mission was kept profoundly secret, for they refused to disclose it, except to the Commander of the Faithful in person. Rumours of hostility and defiance were abroad, and as the bearing of the new comers seemed to corroborate such suspicions, the prudent Jahia refused, during the absence of his master, to grant them admission into the city. Having consulted the sages of the court, he caused an ample and commodious encampment to be prepared for their reception, a few miles below the city. Provisions, choice and in abundance, were here furnished by the officers of the royal household, and all communication was interdicted between the strangers and the inhabitants of Bagdad.

Five times a day does every pious Mussulman turn his face towards Mecca; but oftener than this the good Jahia ascends the terrace of his palace, and looks anxiously towards the holy city. He is not forgetful of the sacred ceremonies of religion, yet his prayers are of no worth. Though he carefully avoids the approach of any unclean thing, and purifies his person with the most scrupulous exactitude, yet he is unmindful of that, the neglect of which, according to the dictates of the Prophet, must invalidate his worship, more than any outward omission. His thoughts wander from

heaven, and, while the name of the Supreme is upon his lips, the image of his sovereign fills his soul. Of the same fault are guilty many citizens in their devotions. Even the muezzinn, as from the high minaret he summons the faithful to prayer, forgets his Kebab;⁴ and, as he scans the southern horizon, thinks only of the return of his calif.

Under these circumstances, it was to be expected, that the first approach of the pilgrims should be discovered by the watchful citizens. Accordingly, on the day when our tale commences, word was brought to Jahia, that a body of men was seen approaching from the southward. The messenger found the old man already aware of their coming, and watching their progress over the plain.

"Look, Fadhel," said Jahia to his eldest son, who was standing at his side, "look with care, thine eyes are young, and must even now discern them."

"There can be no doubt, my father, it is the calif. Those red turbans—do you not see them?"

"I see them not."

"The shining caparison of their steeds, the order and regularity of their march, these at least you can observe."

"I do, Allah be praised!" exclaimed the old man. "Mount thy horse, my son, and greet the calif, ere he encounter those Christian dogs:

some evil may chance of their meeting." Fadhel obeyed, and in a few moments was spurring from the gates of the city.

The news spread rapidly throughout Bagdad. The walls and housetops were quickly crowded with citizens, desirous to catch the first glimpse of their approaching monarch. Long do they wait, for the march of that band is stately and slow, but their patience is at last rewarded. The sun has not left the horizon, ere they can discern the person of the calif. Loud are the acclamations of the people, as the Commander of the Faithful enters the city; fervent prayers are uttered for the prosperity and continuance of his reign; thanks are offered up in the mosque, by Haroun, for his safe return; warm greetings pass between returning and long-left friends; and the busy delighted assemblage soon separate to the quiet of their homes.

Night has come, and with it repose, to many weary, many troubled souls. Even the calif has divested himself of his cares, and forgets them in slumber. Giafar alone could not find rest. He had been busily employed in preparing for the reception of the Roman embassy, which was to take place on the following day. Every officer of the household had his charge. The soldiery were in readiness, and his experience and attention had omitted nothing which might contribute to the splendour of to-morrow's pageant. This occupation had the effect of diverting, for a time, his

attention from himself; and it was not until he retired to his palace that he had leisure to turn his thoughts inward.

The features of the princess Abassa were deeply imprinted in his soul. Accident had disclosed their beauty to his view; but no chance, no lapse of time, and no effort of resolution, could thenceforward erase their remembrance. He thought of her high rank, her sacred lineage, of the pride of her father, and his heart drooped within him. His future life seemed a desert, parched and arid. Yet when he recurred to the calif's friendship, and called to mind words which had fallen from his lips, then, as though rain from heaven had descended upon this waste, all was green, and hopes and joys freshened upon its surface. Long did he muse upon his hopes, his fears; upon the worth and beauty of his mistress, until nature, wearied at last, sought refuge in repose.

"God is merciful!" said the young prince with a sigh, and he consigned himself to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

Allah, most high ! Allah, most high ! there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of God. Come to prayer—come to prayer—come to the temple of salvation. There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of God. Come to prayer—prayer is better than sleep—come to the temple of salvation.—*The Ezzann.*

THE silver voices of the muezzinns have chanted forth the ezzan, and every good Mussulman has obeyed the summons. The sun has just risen upon the city. All Bagdad is at prayer. The calif himself, in the sacred character of chief imam, conducts the holy rites, and devotion swells in the bosom of his subjects, as they listen to the voice of their pilgrim monarch. The duties of religion are soon performed, and the mosques are deserted. Crowds of citizens, as curiosity prompts, bend their way to various portions of the city. Many throng upon the southern wall to view the approach of those foreign knights, who are seen advancing in solemn array. Others are attracted to the river's banks, where many a gilded barge is stealing from the shore, with its crimson awnings flaunting in the air ; and noble galleys, with their decorated crews, are seen parting the waters.

The Tigris is pavilioned with silk and gold—the thirsty sunbeams can scarcely drink of its waters.

The current of the populace, however, set towards the imperial palace. In the courtyard was ranged a portion of the battle guard of the calif, a chosen body of warriors, which, to the number of one hundred and sixty thousand men,⁵ were arrayed throughout the city. They were clad in coats of mail, covered with fine white linen, and their turbans were of the same colour and material. Across their shoulders were hung broad battle axes of steel; each in his right hand grasped a ponderous mace at arms, while in his left he bore a golden purse, in which was contained his yearly stipend. The sinews of war were all there—equipment, discipline, and pay—everything that could delight the eye of a warrior, and impress the spectator with a sense of the power and magnificence of their chief.

Opposite to these, and finely contrasting with them, were drawn up ten thousand red-turbaned horsemen, such as have been before described.

Three gates of the left wing of the royal palace are presently thrown open, and from each issue a thousand white eunuchs, while, from the opposite quarter of the building, throng forth the same number black as night. Their weapons are naked cimeters born in their right hands, and sheathless poniards which glitter at their girdles. They enter the hall of audience to place themselves

around the calif's throne—fit emblems of Eastern despotism. Seven hundred porters swept the dust from the steps of marble, and waited at the numerous doors which gave ingress to the various recesses of the palace.

Around the vestibule and entrance to the audience chamber were piled stands of arms of every description. There were the Tartar cap and lance, the djerrid, or dart of the Arab, the bow of the hardy Scythian, with quivers of arrows; and conspicuous among all were the long spear of the Greek, the cuirass and shield, trophies of many wars. The audience chamber itself was hung with rich tapestry, and covered with a thousand carpets, and costly furniture was scattered around in oriental profusion.

Here and there, from the huge throat of many a sculptured lion, issued fountains of water into marble basins, while mingled with them reclined the living monarch of the forest, hardly to be distinguished from his chiselled representative, save by his rolling eye, and the sluggish motion of his nervous tail. At times, indeed, they stretched their wide jaws, and displayed to view the white and pointed tusks with which they were furnished, yawning hideously, yet not in anger; evincing rather, as it might seem, their listlessness at being the spectators of so tame, so idle a pageant. Upon fourscore Persian carpets crouched as many richly spotted tigers, leashed in silk, each with his keeper startling the astonished spectator by their terrific yet exquisite beauty.

Trees of rare workmanship bent beneath the weight of their golden fruit, enclosed in which, as in little censers, were burning cinnamon, ambergris, and aloe wood, which diffused through the air their sweet perfume.

High amid this scene of splendour was reared a throne of ebony, upon which sat Haroun al Raschid, clothed in a robe and vest of the deepest black. It was the favourite hue of the Abassides. A rich turban of the same gloomy colour surmounted his brow, from which nodded three glossy heron plumes, secured by a circlet of invaluable jewels. Upon his shoulders hung the Burdé, or sacred mantle of Mohammed, and his right hand grasped the staff which once supported the steps of the apostle of God. Upon each side the throne waved the sable standards of his race, the "Night" and the "Shadow," and seemed to shed obscurity from their folds over the gorgeous spectacle around.

The calif's three sons sat upon the topmost step of the throne, while around it stood the lords of state and officers of the royal household. Conspicuous among these were the venerable Jahia and his sons, Mesrour and Ibrahim, chiefs of the black and white eunuchs; Gabriel, the royal physician, a man of rare endowments; and many others, whose grave and noble presence gave dignity to the assemblage. Around the hall was ranged close latticework, through which houris, or gentle beings as celestial as they, were gazing, their bosoms

heaving with an eager curiosity, which, it is true, seemed somewhat allied to earth.

All was still and motionless throughout the court, when in a few moments the ringing of steel chains, and the tramp of armed feet, announced the approach of the Grecian knights. At the instruction of an officer appointed for that purpose, they stooped their foreheads to the threshold, in which was enchased a portion of that black stone⁶ which for ages has been an object of the pilgrim's reverence at Mecca. Yet it was with reluctance that they submitted to this unworthy ceremony. A few, less complying, or more adroit than the rest, spurned or avoided the degradation, and many, as they bent, spat in abhorrence upon the threshold, and muttered secret curses against the impostor of Mecca. As the strangers entered the hall, they seemed at first dazzled by the strange magnificence that burst upon their sight: the Eastern pomp and apparel, the fierce beasts that seemed ready to make their spring, and the forms of men still fiercer, that darkened around the apartment. Yet it was for a moment only that they permitted their attention to be diverted by these objects. Calling to mind their sacred character, and the high errand upon which they came, they shook off the feeling of awe which for a moment chilled their bosoms, and advanced with dignity to the foot of the throne. They were, in truth, a gallant band. Their plated armour fitted closely to their persons, and the plumes in their helmets drooped gracefully upon

their steeled shoulders. No jewels nor rich robes adorned their dress, but the iron garb which they wore shone like the diamond, and sat as easily upon their frames as though woven in the looms of India. The calif gazed upon them for a moment in silence, then waving his hand, signified that he was in readiness to receive their message.

The chief ambassador, a man with white hair, and of dignified appearance, bowing lowly, proffered then a sealed epistle, which the vizier took from his hands and presented to his master.

"Read it thyself, Giafar," said the calif; "read it aloud, so that all present may hear."

The prince undid the seal, glanced his eye hastily over the writing, and replied,

"'Tis for thine ear alone, most noble sovereign."

"Read on," was the stern reply; and the vizier read as follows:—

"Nicephorus, emperor of the Romans, to Haroun, king of the Arabians, sends greeting. Let not the peace of two mighty nations be disturbed by thine ambition. The late empress, whom God has taken to himself, considered thee a rook and herself a pawn. That weak woman submitted, indeed, to pay thee a price for thy friendship; but know that a king has come upon the throne, who will not render a tribute unworthy the majesty of the empire. Be content to live in amity with thine equals, restore the fruits of thine avarice and insatiable rapacity, or receive from the hands of my ambassadors the only tribute a soldier can pay thee."

"Ha! the hound!" exclaimed the calif. And then, "What is the tribute that he sends?" came sharply from between his set teeth.

At this demand, one of the knights strode boldly forward, and having disengaged a bundle of swords from the folds of silk in which it was enwrapped, cast it down at the foot of the throne.

The flash of the midnight lightning is not more sudden and startling than was the change produced upon the haughty calif by this bold procedure. The blood deserted his face, leaving it pale as ashes, and his frame trembled with anger, which he was evidently, yet unsuccessfully, striving to master. He strained his cimeter tightly in his grasp, while his eyes glared rapidly from one object to another, like those of some wild beast that is about to spring upon his prey, but is as yet uncertain as to the individual object of attack.

When his emotion permitted him to speak, he exclaimed in tones in which passion predominated,

"Now, by my father's beard! but this is overbold. Have you thought upon the value of your lives, that you have come upon so insolent an errand?"

"We have, my lord," replied the aged ambassador.

"Answer me not," interrupted the calif. "Yet speak. I will listen. What warrant have you for their safety?"

"The honour of a king," was the firm reply. "And it will suffer a foul blot, great prince, should

but a single hair of our heads be injured at thy bidding."

"You have counted too far upon my forbearance," exclaimed the monarch, angrily. "Here, in mine own court," he muttered to himself, "thus to be bearded! Blood, blood alone can wash out this insult."

"It must flow freely, and from thine own subjects, ere we are butchered even here," exclaimed a veteran knight, looking around at the naked cimeters which were bristling throughout the hall. "Yet if there be bravery or courtesy among Persian nobles, let them grant us a clear field and we will bide the encounter. For myself," he added, tauntingly, "I will be content to leave my body in the sands, if my good sword cannot redeem it from the bravest two that will dare to face me."

An expression of satisfaction predominated over anger in the calif's countenance, as he saw his nobles press forward to accept the bold challenge of the Greek, and still more when he perceived his favourite son Amin among the number.

"It is well, friends," he exclaimed; "yet fall back. My brave son, many thanks; but it may not be. Thou shalt hunt the foxes in their den; but here it may not be. Fall back, Amin; fall back, every one!"

All obeyed this reiterated command except Giafar, who still kept his place near his master's side. He had watched with anxiety the effect produced upon the haughty soul of the calif by the

reading of the Roman emperor's insulting message, and he trembled for the result. Determined even at the risk of losing his master's favour, to deter him from any outrage upon the sacred persons of the ambassadors, he had advanced, and was about to prostrate himself at his feet, when the occurrence just related interrupted the course of Haroun's anger, and enabled him to control his indignation.

The challenge of the Greek was not heard by the vizier, or if heard was not heeded. His eyes were fixed upon his master, watching in his features those changes that varying passion produced upon his angry countenance. He saw that his brow was yet unbent, that his hand still grasped his cimeter, that he was about to descend from his throne, and he hesitated to leave him.

"Stay not by my side," said the calif. "Thou needst not fear me, Giafar."

"Strike at the life of thy slave, my lord," exclaimed the prince; "there will be many left who can serve thee as well. But strike not a blow at thine own honour; when once wounded, that thou canst not heal."

"Nay, fear me not, I say. Thou mistakest my purpose. I would but try the temper of these swords—this tribute that the emperor hath sent me. I would see," and here he smiled scornfully, "if they are toys for children, or blades fit for a soldier's use."

So saying, the calif descended to the lowest step

of the throne, and placing his foot upon the glittering blades, drew from its sheath his good Samsamah. Raised to the full stretch of his arm, above the monarch's head, the weapon glittered for a moment in air, and then descended like lightning upon the steel bundle, severing it completely in two, and shivering the swords of which it was composed into a thousand fragments.

A murmur of admiration ran through the court at a feat of such dexterity and strength, and the strangers wondered to see their best blades shattered like glass by the well-tempered sword of the monarch. The calif's first movement was to examine the edge of his cimeter, to see if it had suffered from the rude concussion. The result of this scrutiny seemed satisfactory, for he smiled grimly, and reached the weapon to Giafar, who, having scanned it carefully, returned it to his master with a responding look of gratification. Indeed we learn from the annalist of the times, that "There was not the slightest bruise or indenture upon its surface; proving," he adds, "both the goodness of the blade, and the strength of the arm that wielded it."

The calif having now reascended the throne, turned to address the ambassadors.

"The courtesy of your emperor shall not be forgotten. I will well requite it," and he smiled bitterly as he spoke. "For every sword he hath sent me I will bring to him a thousand, and strong hands shall bear them—faithful hands—hands that

would turn them even against their own bosoms at my slightest wish. Slaves!" exclaimed the monarch, his face glowing with pride and enthusiasm, as he turned to the swarthy forms that were ranged like bronze statues around the audience chamber—"slaves, have I not said aright? Who of you has a life at his master's service?"

Obedient to this call numbers rushed forward, and bent their necks to the ground in token of their devotion to the calif's will. Haroun looked upon them for a moment as they stooped before his throne, and then beckoned an officer, who approached with his cimeter unsheathed.⁸ At a sign from the Commander of the Faithful, the executioner struck off the head of the foremost, and the marble steps were deluged with blood. He looked again upon the calif, and again the blade descended upon its victim. Another look, and a third suffered the fate of the two former, yet still the ready wretches gathered to the cimeter's edge, and even when commanded to retire, seemed to linger for their death, as for some dispensation from a propitious deity.

Stifled sobs, half-suppressed screams, and exclamations of terror, came from the surrounding lattice, testifying the emotion of the fair beings there concealed at this scene, one shriek sounding loudly above the rest. At this the monarch frowning, turned his head hastily towards that part of the chamber whence these sounds proceeded. All was in an instant hushed. Silence, gloomy and

fearful, brooded over the assembly. Haroun watched with gratified pride the emotion produced upon the Roman knights at a spectacle so revolting; a spectacle at which even the calif's veteran court were moved. As for the strangers, they were stupified with horror; they stirred not, they seemed hardly to breathe.

They were soon aroused, however, by the voice of Haroun, who, turning to them with a stern aspect, said,

"And now, ye misbelieving dogs, depart upon the instant. Let not your horses' hoofs tarry upon these plains. If to-morrow's sun finds you upon this side the Euphrates, your carcasses shall fatten the sands of the desert. Yet stay," he added, as his eye glanced at Nicephorus's letter, which Giafar still held, "your master's message shall not go unanswered."

He then dictated the following epistle of "tremendous brevity," (as it is styled by a distinguished historian,) which was written upon the outside of the missive of the Roman emperor.

"In the name of the most merciful God, Haroun al Raschid, Commander of the Faithful, to Nicephorus, Roman dog. I have read thy letter, oh! thou son of a misbelieving mother! Thou shalt not hear—thou shalt behold my reply."

This was sealed with the calif's signet ring, and delivered into the hands of the ambassadors.

"Now away, and quickly," said the monarch. "Yet before you depart, look around upon the

warriors that stand in my presence. Mark, ere you leave this city, the many troops that are arrayed within its walls. Note well my power, and the devotion of my subjects. Then go, and bid your emperor tremble ; bid him keep within the gates of Constantinople when his lord approaches. Let him not dare to face me in the field, unless he can oppose me with warriors who can die like mine, and weapons of a far different temper from these toys."

As he spoke, he pointed to the glittering fragments which were strewed beneath his feet, and glanced slightly at the headless bodies of his slaves that lay near.

There were gazing on him at that moment some gentle beings who loved him well, and who looked to see some sign of pity and regret pass across his features ; but no—his mien was haughty, his countenance stern and enkindled, and in imagination he seemed leading his troops to the rich conquest of the Grecian capital.

The Roman embassy retired slowly, and with some appearance of dignity, but their bosoms were awed by the calif's power, and sickened by the display of his revolting despotism. They feared lest a monarch so powerful, and so well served, should make good the fierce threats which were yet ringing in their ears. They feared lest the desolation of war should follow close upon their track, and enter quickly into their own land. They looked to see the fierce calif answer with fire and

sword the stern message of their sovereign—a message worthy the ancient dignity of the empire if supported with bravery and effect, yet one which must bring upon their heads the full fury of a war-like and powerful monarch.

After the departure of the foreign knights, the hall was cleared of all but the lords of state, who, assembled in full divan, held council together. This, however, was but a mere form. Haroun was bent on war; and his subjects were eager as himself to wash out in the blood of their enemies the stain upon their sovereign's honour. No time was needed for preparation. All things were in readiness for the field, and the calif was resolved to lead his troops against the enemy without delay. After a short deliberation, it was decided that the army should set forth upon its march against the infidels upon the following day.

"Giafar," said the calif to his vizier, as they left the council chamber together, "I would see thee to-night at the palace, after the hour of evening prayer. I have somewhat to say to thee that concerns thee nearly. And—dost thou hear me, Giafar?—I have a gift to bestow upon thee that thou little dreamst of; one, to which all former favours are as nothing. Inquire no more of me at present; to-night thou shalt know all. Farewell. See that thou dost not fail me."

"I will not fail thee, my lord," replied the wondering prince, and they parted.

CHAPTER V.

And he, the enchanter of the scene,
Who gave thee hope—then brought thee blight,
Who said, "Behold yon world of light!"
Then sudden dropp'd a veil between.

Lalla Rookh.

INDEFATIGABLE as the calif was in the duties which belonged to his high station, he was, as has been said, extremely sensible to the pleasures of social life. Though ready in the field, and constant in the divan, yet when the toils of state were over, he delighted to surrender himself to those enjoyments which abounded within the walls of his palace. There, every pleasure greeted him; sweet lutes and sweeter voices sounded in harmony. There, exquisite forms hurried through the mazes of the dance, revealing, in fascinating pantomime, their rival, yet unrivalled proportions. Rare perfumes, rich viands, and delicious sherbets, regaled and restored the senses, while Schiraz and Kismische poured their forbidden but enlivening currents.

At these hours the calif often sighed for the presence of his beloved Giafar. While he was absent, there rested a blank, a dark spot upon the

face of all his pleasures. Every enjoyment seemed imperfect without the participation of his friend. But the custom of the country forbade; the inviolable usages of the harem permitted not his entrance within its sacred precincts. There was one method, however, by which this barrier to the calif's wishes might be removed. As his son-in-law, as the husband of his daughter Abassa, the doors of the harem would be thrown open to the prince, nor could the most punctilious observer of Eastern etiquette object to his admission within its walls. Often and carefully had the Commander of the Faithful pondered upon this subject, and no measure in the government of his vast kingdom occupied his attention oftener, or perplexed him more, than the accomplishment of this purpose, which seemed so necessary to his private happiness.

On the evening of the day when he received and dismissed the Roman ambassadors with such haughtiness, as he sat in his palace awaiting the coming of Giafar, the subject pressed upon his mind with more than usual force. He had undertaken a war with a powerful nation, and was about to bend to it with that energy which characterized all his military operations. He was confident in the valour of his troops, in his own qualifications as a leader, and in the favouring power of Allah; yet he failed not to perceive that the campaign must be long and dangerous, and might be unfavourable in its issue. He himself might not return.

He had resolved to humble the pride of the Roman emperor, and for this he would peril his life, to that extremity, which his duty as a sovereign and a commander would permit; for death, to his haughty spirit, was preferable to defeat.

Thus situated, a motive besides the one already mentioned, prompted him to give his daughter in marriage to the prince. He wished to leave his sons, who were yet young, under the protection of one, united to him and to his family by the closest ties—one, who if the chance of war should deprive the kingdom of its sovereign, would be superior to the temptations of ambition, and would watch carefully over the interests of the sons of him who had been his own munificent patron and father. But the calif's foible was jealousy of power. He feared lest this step might lay the foundation of civil discord, which, though it might not interrupt the tranquillity of his own reign, might disturb the succession of his sons, and transfer the sceptre into the hands of the Barmecides. This was the thought that made him hesitate, that checked his half-formed purpose, even when upon the verge of resolution.

In the mean time, Giafar, in strange agitation, was bending his way towards the imperial palace. Hopes and fears came crowding in upon his soul. He felt that he was approaching an important and critical period of his existence, by the result of which his future happiness was to be deeply affected. Had his rank or fortune been less than

they were, he might have supposed that the intimation which had fallen from the calif's lips when he last parted from him, referred to his advancement in one or both of these particulars. But he was the first subject in the empire, and unless his master resigned his crown into his hands, there was no mark of esteem which he could now confer upon him ; save only one, compared with which honours and wealth were of no account. When the thoughts of the young prince dwelt for a moment upon this, the only boon, as it seemed to his agitated mind, which the calif could now bestow upon him, a vision of happiness stole with a soothing influence upon his soul. He was far away, in some secluded spot, gazing into the eyes of his mistress, seeing there his wealth and treasure, encompassing in the circlet of his arms his domain, his world, while rank and riches, as things of no worth, were fleeting away in the distance.

A stifling oppression, which almost impeded respiration, aroused him from his revery. He collected himself, and proceeded more firmly on, for his step had become slow and irregular. A few moments brought him to the palace gates, yet ere they had elapsed, the vizier was again lost in tumultuous and conflicting emotions. He composed himself as he ascended the steps, and when he entered the presence of Haroun, no trace of the feelings which disturbed his bosom could be read in his practised countenance.

Giafar found the calif occupied with the plans of

his extended expedition, and became in a few moments as deeply interested as his master, while they spoke together of the state and number of his troops, of the routes proposed, and of the general plan of the campaign.

"Like you it not?" said the monarch, warmly, as he sketched in a hurried manner a course by which he proposed to lead his army even to the shores of the Propontis—"like you it not, Giafar? We will knock at his very doors. Allah be praised, who has given his servant means to accomplish such a work."

"'Tis a bold project, sire," replied the prince, surprised at the extent of the calif's designs. "Many a league of hostile country, many a fortress and walled town must be passed, ere you can reach that sea."

"Has time dulled the cimeters of my warriors, or age weakened mine own arm? I have bathed my horses' limbs in those waters ere now," continued Haroun, his dark eye flashing as he spoke; "and when I threatened Constantinople, what saved that proud city? Submission and tribute."

"I was but a child, then, my lord," said the vizier, "yet I have heard my father oft speak of that war. But Nicephorus is a soldier—"

"The more worthy of my arms. He will not shun me, then, in battle. Be assured I shall seek him there, and should the dog trust himself within reach of my arm, with this sword will I convert him to our blessed faith. Prostrate upon the

ground he shall abjure his accursed creed, even at the feet of the vicar of our most holy Prophet—the salvation and peace of God be upon him," added the calif, in a subdued tone, yet his right hand was still extended, as though present in the field he was bidding defiance to an enemy.

"God grant it, sire! May you clip the wings of the Roman eagle. Yet what part is mine in this war?"

"You go not with us, Giafar," replied the calif. "Let the care of my subjects be thine. Keep order in the city; administer justice in the divan. Thine own wisdom shall guide thy councils, and in the execution of thy plans thou hast the sanction and authority of my own name, and art clothed as with mine own power. Thy father will aid thee in the discharge of thy duties."

"My services are thine to command, sire," answered the prince.

"Strange! I thought to be hard beset with entreaties and prayers that thou mightst bear a part with us in this gallant enterprise. What sayst thou?" added Haroun, surprised at the prince's silence—"not a word? I have known thee plead as for life, to accompany me upon some excursion to the frontiers, and now, when we strike at such game, wouldst thou lag behind?"

"I have never tarried, sire, when thou hast pointed out my path; but thou hast spoken; and at the voice of the king the slave should humble himself and be silent."

"I looked not to find thee thus complying," said the calif, with a smile. "Thou wilt watch, too, over all sedition and heresy which may arise among my people, whether near or afar off. Nay, it is near thee now; nearer than thou thinkest. Jahia Ben Abdallah is, if I err not, plotting treason against my throne. I have watched him long; often when he has little deemed that the eye of his master was on him, have I read in the restless and hurrying changes of his face, the workings of a false and treacherous spirit. He waits but my departure with the army to break forth into open rebellion. Observe him closely. Upon the least suspicion, do thou take his life."

"I will not fail, my lord, in aught which thou hast commanded me."

"Yet hold," muttered the calif, musing to himself, "'twere folly to be forestalled in this; he is all craft and falsehood. I will waver no longer; not an instant. Now that I have bethought me," he continued, turning abruptly to the prince, an expression of dark determination gleaming suddenly across his features—"now that I have bethought me, let it be done without delay. Ere I depart from Bagdad, bring me the traitor's head."

"If my lord will listen to the voice of his servant," said the young prince, with hesitation.

"Well, what wouldst thou say, Giafar? speak freely."

"Thou mayst remember, my lord, that Jahia Ben Abdallah came to thy court under an assu-

rance of safety given to him in thy name by my brother Fadhel, when sent by thee with an army against him. That assurance thou hast since confirmed; and it will suit ill with thine honour, my lord, thus to deal with him, without strong proof of his faithlessness. Men will say that the promises of princes are but as stubble, which the wind scattereth and the fire consumeth, when they should prove as a band of well-tempered steel, bright and unyielding."

"And what will they say of my wisdom and prudence, Giafar, if I crush not the scorpion till it hath stung me? if, with the power to stifle rebellion in the cradle, I should wait until it leap forth in its strength to peril my kingdom and my life? No; he has forfeited his safety by his ill desert and treachery, and let him die."

"He is daily at court, my lord, and beareth him like a faithful subject."

"Ay; and did not fears for a brother's honour blind thee, thou wouldst see good cause for suspicion even in this. When Jahia first came to Bagdad, he led a life private and retired. He made then no professions of fidelity, for then he meditated no treason. But now he seeks to cloak his dark designs with adulation and a show of loyalty. I trust him not. Thou needst not plead for him. I have spoken. Let him die."

Giafar saw that reply would be of no avail, and he bowed his head in silence.

"Are all things ready for our departure upon the morrow?"

"They are, my lord, or nearly so. A few hours will accomplish all that is yet wanting."

"'Tis well done," said the calif. "But there yet remains a subject of which I would speak to thee. Months must elapse ere I can return from this war; indeed, it may be that I shall never revisit Bagdad."

"Fear it not, my most noble master," said the prince. "Allah will watch over thy safety."

"I do not fear it, Giafar," was the quick reply. "Were it written in the book of Heaven's decrees that I should fall in this contest, and were the page set before me by the angel who has it in his keeping, still I would not keep back. Yet if such should prove the will of Heaven," continued Haroun, impressively, "upon thy faith do I depend even after death. My testament—'tis in the hands of my wife Zobeide—see that every tittle of it be executed. Let not my sons be defrauded of their rights; they are yet young; watch over their inexperience and guard their interests. Thou wilt do it; I need not question it. Be to them what I have been to thee; I will ask no more."

The vizier replied not in words, but his heart was full, and his expressive features spoke eloquently of the fidelity that was swelling in his bosom.

Haroun waited for no other answer, but exclaimed, "I thank the Almighty that he has given me such a servant! Without thee, my kingdom were but a burden upon my shoulders, yes, and life

also. But thou hast well assisted me to support them; and wilt continue yet to do so, may it please the most merciful Allah!"

"With my life, sire, and long may it be spared for thy service," replied the prince, with much emotion.

"How, Giafar, can I reward thy worth? speak, is there yet nothing which thou wouldst ask at my hand?"

"My services are overpaid already, my most generous lord," answered the vizier. "Owe I not everything I am to thee?"

"True, true," said the monarch. "I have not spared wealth and honours to heap them on thee, so far as they have been mine to bestow—yet I would bind thee closer to me still. My daughter Abassa is worthy the hand of a king—nay, there breathes no monarch, however powerful, upon whom I would willingly bestow her. She is the dearest treasure I possess—her virtues and her beauties are unequalled, and the riches of India could not purchase her from me. Yet to thee will I freely resign her. Thy worth and thy fidelity—dost thou hear me, Giafar?" The prince had stooped low, and pressed his forehead to the ground before the calif's feet. "I give her to thee in marriage."

It would be difficult for any pen, however eloquent, to describe faithfully the emotions of the prince at hearing these words. The rapture of a lover when hopes long nourished are gratified to the

full—the tide of bliss that rolls in upon the soul, filling, even to bursting, that bosom whose current despair has long stagnated, or conflicting hopes and fears have urged into a restless storm—such feelings many may know, but few can faithfully portray.

“Thy daughter—the Princess Abassa—mine! Let me hear it from thy lips again, sire. My senses are confused—I may not have heard aright.”

“Rightly thou hast heard,” said the calif, “but in part only. I give her to thee as a public mark of my esteem; not to gratify thy love. I give her to thee that the strict usages of the harem may not separate us as they often do, when I most desire thy presence. Yet I would have no offspring of thine dispute the succession with my sons, when my head and thine shall lie low at the foot of some cypress. What moves thee so? the colour is gone from thy face, and thou tremblest like a frightened girl! Nay, I will not deprive thee of those rights which the customs of our country, and of our holy religion, permit. Those bounds alone that restrain every pious Mussulman shall be thine. Beauty may yet spread her charms for thee, the fairest slaves may grace thy harem, but my daughter—thou understandest me?”

The kind indulgence implied in the calif's words had not the effect of calming the prince's agitation, whatever may have been its nature. The red blood crimsoned his brow for an instant, and then

retreated, giving place to deathlike paleness. "My lord," was his tremulous reply, "thy servant is quick to comprehend thy wishes," and then, after some hesitation, he added, "and not less ready to obey them."

Giafar had raised himself from the earth, and endeavoured to compose his countenance, but though he ordinarily commanded his features with singular power, the present conjuncture seemed too trying for his firmness. Conscious of this, he covered his face with his hands; but a shivering, like that of a chill ague, shook his frame, and betrayed to his observing master the existence of some powerful and secret emotion. The calif readily divined its nature, and addressed him with some sternness. "Bethink thyself well of this matter, Giafar. See that thou canst follow my commands implicitly, for to err from them would change the love I now bear thee into hatred as intense. Examine carefully thy self-control, thy fortitude. The princess possesses charms which might subdue the coldest heart, will thine be able to resist them?"

"I have felt their power, sire, but my soul is thine; my very wishes are in thy keeping."

"Thou mayst have been moved by the sweetness of her voice, or delighted by her wit and gayety; but thou has not seen her smile, thou hast not looked upon her eyes or beheld the crimson of her cheek. Thou knowest not the danger of the trial to which my friendship would subject thee.

By the beard of my father! but thou shalt see her. Thou shalt not enter blindfold upon a path which may lead thee to thy ruin."

"Chance, my lord," said the prince, hesitatingly, "chance has—"

"Well!"

"I have already seen her."

"How sayst thou?—seen her?" exclaimed the calif. "Thy words border upon madness, or thou speakest of what, in thine hours of slumber, thou hast dared to dream."

Briefly, then, did Giafar relate to his jealous master the accident which caused the disclosure of the princess's features in the desert, and the emotion which rendered her for a few moments unconscious of the exposure of her charms. As he spoke of her anxiety for her father's safety, pleasure lighted up his dark eye, and he exclaimed,

"Ever mine own child! But how looked she, Giafar?"

"Beautiful as the full moon when the sky is without a cloud," replied the prince, enthusiastically. "Rightly is she named the 'Rose of Persia.' Never thought I till then that such loveliness dwelt on earth."

"But she was pale, thou sayst?"

"Fear, my lord, had placed his finger upon her cheek, and stolen thence its colour."

"The fatigues of the journey, also," said the fond father, "may have dimmed her beauty, and the desert breeze, thou knowest, freshens not the roses

upon a maiden's cheek. I will not leave Bagdad to-morrow, but will remain yet a day, that thou mayst see my daughter, and decide upon a subject which lies so near my heart. Let thy brothers set forward with the army, immediately after morning prayer. On the ensuing day, accompanied by Ibrahim, and a few chosen warriors of his train, I will follow, and can with ease overtake them. As soon as the troops have left the city, come to the palace; this key will admit thee through a private staircase, into a gallery which overlooks one of the apartments of the harem. Enter, and conceal thyself behind the lattice. When thou seest the princess, be prudent, be silent—let no sound escape thy lips which may betray thee. And if from a regard to thine own safety, thou shalt refuse a boon, which may bring thee ruin instead of happiness, I charge thee, Giafar, breathe not to mortal ear that thine eyes have rested upon her. Thou shalt see her as she comes attired from the hands of her maidens; thou shalt hear her sing to her lute—thou shalt know the full worth and danger of her attractions. And when thine eyes have gazed upon her unveiled beauty—when thine ears have drunk in the rich music of her voice—when thy soul has felt the power of her bright glances—then thou shalt say, if, as the husband of my daughter, thou canst obey my wishes."

The wondering prince bowed low before his master, in token of obedience; then taking from his hand the key which was extended to him, turned from him in silence, and departed.

CHAPTER VI.

Who hath not proved how feebly words essay
To fix one spark of beauty's heavenly ray?
Who doth not feel, until his failing sight
Faints into dimness with its own delight,
His changing cheek, his sinking heart confess,
The might, the majesty of loveliness!

Bride of Abydos.

ON the following morning the sun shone brightly upon the land. Not a cloud intercepted his rays, which were reflected with dazzling brightness from shining arms and armour, which flashed and glittered in long array, as Persia poured forth her chivalry from the numerous gates of the capital. The tramp of warriors and the hard treading of horses' hoofs were drowned at those intervals when bands of oriental music passed along, by the beating of tambours, the clang of cymbals, and the wild and mournful sound of the horn, which gave spirit, if need there were, to the step of the soldier, and aroused in the breast of every hearer a martial enthusiasm.

As far as the eye could reach, a river of white and red turbans was rolling across the plain. Here and there, gayly floating down its current, were

seen streaming banners, high amid which was waving gloomily the dark standard of the monarch. Around this crowded the nobles of the nation, conspicuous among whom were Fadhel, Mohammed, and Moussa, the brothers of the vizier. These experienced warriors, mindful of the fatigues which awaited them, rode steadily along, curbing with careful hand the motions of their eager steeds, to whose fiery restlessness their younger or more impatient companions gave free way, expending heedlessly those energies, which would all be needed for the arid and toilsome journey before them. Upon the walls were thousands of citizens, watching their departure. Turrets and terraces were covered with mothers, wives, and maidens, gazing veiled upon the dazzling yet melancholy scene.

Giafar saw them depart without a sigh. In his bosom there was no response to the ardour and exultation which were visible everywhere around him. He took leave of his gallant brothers without regret. As he pressed them in his arms, he uttered, it is true, a few words in which he affected to envy their good fortune, but they came not from his heart. He lingered a while watching their progress over the plain, until distance slowly hid them from his sight ; then turning, he proceeded towards the royal palace.

When before had he seen his companions in arms depart for the battle, and he not eager to lead or follow them ; and why did he now rejoice that duty kept him from the field ? Why did he delight to

roam about the dull circuit of a deserted city when he might be spurring his steed at the head of brave followers, and wandering through the mazes of the ranged battle, his bright sword lighting him on his way. Struck by the change which had taken place in his soul, he was constrained to ask himself these questions. The answer was at his heart, and the young prince blushed as he listened to its silent whisperings. War had no charms, save to win him a wreath of myrtle. Courage and brave deeds were of no account, but as they might gain him the favour or possession of his mistress.

Having arrived at the palace, he entered, and in compliance with the wishes and directions of the calif, unlocked a private door, which displayed a staircase. Ascending this, he found himself in a gallery which overlooked one of the apartments of the harem. He then placed himself behind the latticework, trembling with agitation, and awaited the entrance of the princess. He was about to look upon the loveliest creature of those favoured climes, where beauty blooms in its full, its heavenly perfection.

The Princess Abassa had been educated in strict seclusion ; for her rank in nowise exempted her from those restraints which custom enjoins upon the females of Eastern countries. Accident had disclosed her beauty to the prince, with which exception, man had not looked upon her charms, save her immediate relations, and those miserable im-

ages of manhood that flit about the harems of the great, whose services the jealousy of their men or the temperament of their women has rendered universal throughout Asia. Yet the fame of her loveliness had spread far beyond the walls of her father's palace. Beauty unparalleled, and exquisite wit, were said to be her portion. The lute she touched with the skill of Isaac, and her voice when she sang to it sounded sweet as the angel Israfael's. Men were accustomed to compare the blessings and pleasures of life to her, or to some charm which she possessed, as they would to a celestial being in whose existence and attributes they, through faith, believed.

Giafar waited with something like fear, yet impatiently for her appearance. He breathed quickly, his bosom felt oppressed, and now and then a deep-drawn sigh came to his relief. He looked through the lattice into the chamber below. No living object was visible. The perfume which was diffused throughout the apartment sickened him. He turned to the window which opened upon the river, and the breeze coming across its waters fanned his cheek. Under its soothing influence he became more calm, and in a few moments breathed freely. A second time he looked through the lattice, and a little deformed black met his eye. He was placing in due order the furniture of the apartment. His light footsteps gave no sound as he glided over the rich carpet. His eyes stole into every corner of the chamber, and seemed to insin-

uate themselves behind each fold of hanging curtain and tapestry with which it was adorned. Every irregularity in their arrangement was perceived, and remedied with such wonderful dexterity, that Giafar could not avoid admiring his skill, although he hardly thought himself safe from his penetration. His task performed, the slave retired.

In a few moments the sound of voices and laughter was heard approaching, and a woman of noble presence entered the apartment. She was closely veiled, but, from her voice and manner, Giafar knew her to be the Empress Zobeide. After her came the Princess Abassa. That face—he had seen it once, and never could forget it. But if the glimpse which he had caught of her beauty in the desert had sufficed to subdue his soul, now he was absorbed, entranced, as he gazed upon the full lustre of her charms.

Her veil had been laid aside, and, for the travelling robe in which he had before seen her, she now wore one of white silk, light and loosely flowing. A vest of rich crimson fitted closely to her person, sufficiently revealing how round and voluptuous was the form which it affected to conceal. Her loose trousers, although tied above the ankle, fell, when she stood erect, even to her instep, permitting to be seen incased in a light sandal, a white and delicate foot, which gave promise of a form perfect in all its proportions. Nor would the mind of the fortunate spectator have descended

from its high-wrought expectation, when the position of this beautiful creature permitted his eye to ascend, in some slight degree, beyond the limits just spoken of; for when she reclined against the low divan, or upon one of the many cushions which were strewn throughout the apartment, a fair and exquisitely moulded ankle was visible, even to where the silken band which confined her dress below slightly compressed its polished surface. Encircling each limb was a ring of gold.

But it was only when her face was averted that the prince could notice these interesting particulars. His eyes are fixed intently there—his soul itself is there. His very existence seems to be in the ringlets of her hair, and upon her cheek and neck; and Giafar's self is not where stands that motionless, breathless statue, that bears his image. "Just Allah!" said the vizier, inwardly, "must these beauties which thou hast formed return to thee, like an arrow that has not found its prey to the hand of the huntsman? Shall these charms which deserve love, and would so well repay it, fade, their worth unknown, their sweet influence unfelt?"

Giafar was so deeply wrapped in the contemplation of the princess's beauty, and so absorbed by the thrilling emotions to which it gave rise, that he observed not the entrance of the calif, who followed his daughter into the apartment, and until he was aroused from his revery by the sound of his master's voice, was not aware of his presence.

"Tis a strange fancy, father, but I have obeyed,

and you see me here dressed in the fashion you admire."

The calif's face brightened with pride as he gazed upon his beautiful child, and glancing his eye carelessly around the chamber, he replied, "It is well done—thy maidens have not failed in their duty. But why is it strange, my daughter, that I should wish to see thee thus arrayed? To-morrow I leave Bagdad—it may be for a long season, and when I think of thee, it will be as I last saw thee—thus."

"But," said Abassa, "while I am adorned like a Circassian slave in the bazaars, why is my mother thus robed? why is she covered with that odious veil, as though there were eyes here that must not look upon her?"

"Let my will suffice," replied the calif, with a shade of sternness. "Be satisfied that it is my pleasure."

"Be not angry with me, my father; I have done wrong to question thy commands."

"Do not," said Zobeide, in a melodious tone, "wear that angry countenance. I have often wondered that one who is so kind and gentle as thou art, Haroun, should give way to anger, withering and terrible as I have seen thee yield to; but, at least with lambs do not clothe thyself with the tiger's skin."

"I, Zobeide! I stern and terrible!" said the calif. "When hast thou seen me thus?"

"The fearful events of yesterday have not yet passed from my remembrance," replied Zobeide.

"Fearful!" exclaimed Haroun, "yes, they were so—but not to thee, not to the true believer. Thou sawst infidels tremble, and the messengers of an audacious misbeliever awed by the exhibition of my power. But what was this to thee? thou hadst no cause for fear."

"Those slaves, faithful beings," rejoined Zobeide, "when they knelt at thy feet, I deemed it but a trial of their fidelity, and my bosom glowed as I saw them crowd to receive their death at thy command. But when the fatal—oh! I see them now," she added, covering her face with her hands, as though she would thus exclude the remembrance of the horrid spectacle.

"That scream, then, issued from thy lips? And is it so, Zobeide? the only show of weakness evinced by Moslem on that day came from thee. Art thou not ashamed of such folly? By my life! 'tis a wise custom that mews you up like hawks. You are fit only for the—"

"Nay, my father, 'twas I that screamed," said the princess, interrupting a sentence which promised to be anything but complimentary to her sex. "I would rest content to be mewed up like my own sefy,⁹ and hoarded, too, like him, rather than look again upon a scene so cruel."

"'Tis well," said Haroun, "that the honour of Islamism depends not for its support upon women. But can you regret that slaves have died in the cause for which I venture my kingdom and my honour? Is not my life, too, perilled every hour?"

Do I withhold myself from danger when duty calls me to it? Do you pity them? Slaves as they were, could they hope for a death so honourable, or so happy? Martyrs—they are now in paradise, and well will it be for thee, my daughter, well for me, and thy mother, if our fate is so glorious and so fortunate. To die in the cause of our most holy religion,” continued the monarch, with upbraiding wonder in his voice and countenance, “is this what you regret, and for slaves? Look there!” and as he spoke he directed their attention to one of the many verses from the Koran, that were inscribed in letters of gold upon the walls of the chamber. “Say not of those who are slain in fight, for the religion of God, that they are dead, yea, rather they are living, but ye do not understand.”

“Had the sword of an enemy struck them,” replied Zobeide, “it were different far. But to fall at thine own command!”

“What matters it how they fell, so that in their death they brought profit and honour to Islamism? It is the duty of the slave to die at his master’s bidding. Shall not *I*—” continued the monarch, pointing his finger upward, while pride kindled in his countenance, as he thought that Allah alone was his master.

“I would these wars were over, father,” said the princess, “and that mankind would be content that their fellow-men should differ with them in religion, and not make it the subject of fierce and lasting enmity.”

"'Tis a woman's wish, and savours somewhat of impiety," replied the calif. "What are the lives of the few when compared to the eternal welfare of the many? The prophet of God has commanded us to fight, until all nations shall have embraced our most holy religion, and I, at least, will obey. I will not lay aside this armour, while an infidel lives to cast contempt upon our sacred law, until paradise receives me."

"Thy life, then," said Zobeide, "must be a continued warfare; thine armour must be always buckled on, and thy sword ever in thy grasp."

"Be it so, then," replied the calif; "I shall rest to-morrow, if to-day I have well laboured. Repose in paradise is the reward of him who watches faithfully in this world. Why should I sheath my sword or lay aside this armour? The enemies of Heaven are mine; all, whether they blindly worship fire, or with impious ingenuity have framed a belief which takes from Allah the supremacy, and bestows it upon a fraternity of deities."

"'Tis an idolatrous and fearful creed," said the princess. "Whence is it, my father, that nations which have excelled all others in learning give way to error so strangely impious?"

"'Tis their overweening presumption, their pride of opinion which leads them to it," replied the calif. "Not satisfied with what Heaven has revealed to man, they would refine upon writings which have been inspired by the Allwise. They mingle the conceits of ancient philosophy with their religion;

they cannot forget that their fathers the ancient Romans worshipped—what were their names, Abassa ? they have escaped my memory.”

“They were, Jupiter, who reigned in heaven, Neptune, in the sea, and Pluto, in hell.”

“Right, right. Fools ! blind are they. Reason cannot open the eyes of their understanding, but, by the blessing of Allah, this may somewhat enlighten them,” said Haroun, laying his hand upon his Samsamah. Upon this theme the calif always grew warm. A good Mohammedan, for the most part a strict observer of the Koran, a firm believer in the unity of God, and the mission of his prophet, he piously detested all infidels ; but especially the Christians, whom he termed idolaters ; since by a misconception of their tenets, general throughout the East, they were thought to worship a plurality of gods.

Zobeide, having by some playful remark checked his growing anger, clapped her hands thrice, when presently a slave entered, bearing fruits, sherbets, and refreshments of various kinds. During the slight repast which followed, Haroun called to mind the business of the morning, which he had quite forgotten in the warmth of the preceding discussion, and turning to Zobeide said,

“I leave to-morrow, thou knowest, to overtake the army. I have given it in charge to Jahia, and his son Giafar, to see that my testament is executed, if I should not return. Art thou satisfied that it shall be so ? or are there others that thou

thinkest more faithful, more worthy of the trust ? Thy wishes shall be mine in this matter."

"Is not the venerable Jahia the most estimable of mankind, and are not his sons worthy of their father ?" replied Zobeide.

"Jahia is indeed an old and faithful servant of the throne," said the calif. "I was wrong to speak thus of him ; but Giafar is young and ambitious—"

"Giafar, father !" interrupted the princess ; "can you distrust *him* ? His name, after thine, is oftenest in the mouths of the people. I have often heard thee pronounce him the best servant sovereign ever had."

"He is brave and skilful," said the calif ; "a favourite with the nation ; but he is the more to be feared for this, should the prospect of a crown tempt him to shake off his allegiance. Ha ! daughter ?"

"You wrong him, father ; I am sure you do. One who is so generous, so prodigal of his own, cannot covet that which is another's. I would stake my life upon his honour."

"Thou undertakest warmly his defence, Abassa. Hast thou not a word to say for his brothers, his father, or is he alone worthy of thy praise ?"

"They are all worthy," said the princess, blushing ; "they are proverbial throughout Persia for their liberality and bravery. Listen what the poet says of them.

“‘I asked the dew* if it were free.

“‘It answered, “No, I am the slave of Jal Ben Khaled.”

“‘“I will purchase you, then,” I said.

“‘It replied, “That cannot be. I am the inalienable heritage of his family.””

She sang this to her lute, and her voice gave double sweetness to the beauty of the verses. She looked up in the face of an admiring father, and discovered an expression of smiling exultation in his eye, which he had just withdrawn from the gallery opposite. This was unintelligible to her until a sigh which broke from the entranced vizier came an interpreter to her doubts. With a scream she flew to the arms of her mother, while sob and sob testified a trepidation which must appear affected, or be incomprehensible, to females of more free and social countries. She buried her face in her mother's lap, and enveloped her head and neck in her robe, with a care too undivided to bestow a thought upon the rest of her person. Her mother reproved her fears, and would have persuaded her that her suspicions were unfounded to which she only replied, smiling through her tears, “Hast *thou* no fear, my mother? Give then thy veil.” At the same time she reached her hand, as though she would grasp it.

The terror which Zobeide exhibited at this action was not less than that evinced by her daughter.

* The symbol of liberality.

ter. "Art thou mad?" she exclaimed, drawing the veil more closely to her face, and resisting, with some force, the efforts of Abassa to rob her of its protection. Haroun seemed to participate in the fears of his favourite, for approaching, he said somewhat harshly to his daughter,

"Thou art a foolish child. If thou fearest to be looked upon by thy parents, keep from their presence. Go! yet stay," he added, relenting, "kiss me ere thou goest."

"Not now, my father," said Abassa, still hiding her face and weeping; "but do not forget to see me ere thou leavest, to give me thy blessing and forgive my childish folly."

Her mother departed with her, and Haroun sought the vizier in the gallery. He sought in vain; Giafar was no longer there.

CHAPTER VII.

I with thee will fix my fate.

* * * * * If death

Consort with thee, death is to me as life ;

To lose thee were to lose myself.

Paradise Lost.

GIAFAR left his place of concealment agitated and confused. The charms of the princess, her gayety and loveliness, had finished to enslave him. When he had descended into the open air, he tried for a moment to put some order into the reflections which were hurrying to and fro across his mind, that from thence might be framed a resolution suitable to the emergency before him. It was in vain ; he had not the power. He looked up ; the walls of the harem frowned above him—a gay prison, which contained his world—around was a populous waste. He pulled his turban tightly over his brows, and with folded arms walked hurriedly towards his home.

When there, he entered, and having retired to the solitude of his own chamber, gave himself up to the distracting emotions which were rending his bosom. What an angel had he seen ! what innocence and beauty ! Had the idea of such perfec-

tion ever before visited his fancy? No; not in dreams even, when the mind is all unfettered, and passes the confines of this world.

"I could gaze for ever on her," he exclaimed, "as I have gazed to-day, and ask no other happiness. And this blessing is offered to me—this perpetual enchantment—to have her ever near me, to hear the music of her voice, to dwell in the sunshine of her smiles, and to be looked upon by those eyes of her's! Is there in the wide extent of Allah's universe a heaven like this? Stay! stay!"

Other emotions seemed now to agitate the young prince's bosom, for he paced the apartment with a hurried step, muttering in broken sentences the thoughts that disturbed him.

"'Tis cruel! To point the pilgrim to a delicious shade, when his way perforce lies across the hot desert—it were as kindly done. Yet the choice is mine. I can refuse an offer so tempting and so dangerous. I need not put my lips to the perfumed cup when the full draught is not for me. Better to be wretched alone, than make her a partaker in my misery. Yet is this the sole alternative? Is there no other? Allah have mercy upon me! the blessing of our holy Prophet be with me!" exclaimed the unhappy vizier, prostrating himself upon the carpet. "I know not what to do!"

Here for some time he remained, his face buried in his hands, but revolving with all the calmness which the agitated state of his feelings would permit, the various prospects of his future life. After

some moments he arose, saying, "It shall be so—I cannot live without her now. Time may remove every obstacle to my love—the calif may relent. Indeed this may be but a trial of my fidelity. Death, too," thought the idolizing prince, "which my master so often and so boldly courts, may soon release me from my allegiance;" but a thought so ungrateful he dared not frame into words, it slept in his bosom. "I will tell the calif that I am ready to submit myself to his commands—I will go instantly. Yet have I the firmness necessary for the task? Will he not read in my countenance all that I would conceal within my bosom? I fear me that he would—I will write to him. The parchment cannot disclose more than therein is written. It will not tremble at the calif's glance. Yes, I will write. The firm ink will not grow pale, as I should, in my master's presence."

He then took a roll of parchment from an adjoining cabinet, and after long and restless deliberation, wrote as follows:—

"To his master Haroun al Raschid, from Giafar the slave.

"Thy servant has gazed upon the palace of beauty, and a chain of smiles, glances, and sweet sounds has fettered fast his senses. Yet his heart is in thy hands. It is a strong fortress which love for thee will guard from every intrusion. No passion can enter there to dispute with thee its possession.

“Thy daughter’s hand is a gift more valuable far than all the favours which thou hast yet bestowed upon me. But I would not that an unwilling bride should cross my threshold. If the princess of her own free choice will become the queen of my Zenana, the happiness of thy slave will consist in obedience to his master’s wishes.”

Having sealed this letter he gave it to a slave, with orders to place it in the hands of the Commander of the Faithful. Yet his mind is ill at ease—his reflections pain and distress him—there is no rest for the unhappy lover. He leaves his abode, followed by four slaves, and proceeds to the river. There he enters a barge, and by a sign directs them to row to his garden, a few miles down the stream.

It was noon. Not a breath of air ruffled the surface of the Tigris. Its swift current hurrying capriciously along was a picture of the vizier’s own busy, fluctuating existence; and a lesson of patience, and consolation it might have been to the unhappy man, had he thought upon that gulf in whose quiet bosom those struggling and fitful waters were so soon to be at rest. But the scene was not in unison with his feelings. The magnificence which reigned on the preceding day had disappeared, and the heat of the meridian sun had driven even the fishermen to the shore. His was the only boat upon the waters. All was too quiet and too still to harmonize with the commotion within his soul. He would have held on his way in storms, when the thunder

cloud had waked the river into fury, and the angry elements were wildly striving for the mastery. As it was, the agitation of his mind manifested itself in abrupt orders to increase the speed of the boat, which in a short time became so remarkable as to draw many a silent surmise from his wondering attendants; for in those arbitrary lands, life is often held by so frail a tenure, as to depend alone upon the well-pulled oar, or the swift foot of the steed.

Such suspicions, however, soon vanished, when Giafar, after having landed at his villa, slowly bent his way along the margin of the river. He waved away the sherbets which were proffered to him by the ready hands of his servants, but drank of a running fountain, having first bathed his aching forehead in its cool waters. He then wandered through the long avenues of trees that shaded the grounds; and having found the most retired spot, there surrendered himself to meditation. He forgot what was passing at the city, he remembered not the stern command of the calif respecting his enemy Jahia, his near departure too, and that the care and government of the kingdom were soon to devolve upon him. All was forgotten except his mistress.

Deep shade dwelt everywhere around—and silence also, unless were heard the rustling of leaves, the song of birds, and the murmuring of adjacent fountains. "How sacred would her presence render this spot!" exclaimed the prince. "What delight would be infused over these walks,

and how hallowed would become the shadows of these trees. To walk here with her—to read to her our own delightful poets, and to hear her sing their verses. The treasures of literature shall be brought from afar—the sages of the west shall display to us the jewels of their lore—together we will love and learn. I shall envy the breeze if it plays too freely through her tresses. I shall be jealous of the stars lest such happiness should win them down to rival me. I was right not to refuse such a treasure. I shall be content with this, even if no more is to be mine.” So reasons he who has not tasted of the cup, but not so when the bright wine mingles in his veins, and the current of his blood is warmed by its magic fire. The experience of Giarfar must have taught him this, and though Hafiz had not yet sung the power of love, he should have known what that prince of Persia’s poets has since so beautifully taught in the song which contains the following lines :—

“ The path of love is a path to which there is no end, in which there is no remedy for lovers but to give up their souls.”

From a revery into which he had fallen he was aroused by the sound of oars, and presently he saw the calif’s barge gliding swiftly down the current of the river towards his abode. The fluttering black pennant told that the Commander of the Faithful was on board.

The prince rose, and hurried to the basin where the barge landed to receive his master. At a word

from him he seated himself at his side, and they returned together to the city.

"Art thou mad, to leave the city at such a time?" said the calif, glancing at his countenance and his garments, both of which bore evident marks of the disturbed condition of his mind. "I have sought thee throughout Bagdad, but in vain."

Giafar strove to appear calm, and replied,

"I am not myself, sire. Few are there that could gaze upon what I have gazed on to-day, and yet remain unmoved. Besides, I fear lest the princess—thou hast received my letter?"

"I have, Giafar, and understand thy fears. But thou art deceived; my daughter freely consents to be thy wife. Here, this is for thee."

The calif then placed in the prince's hand a letter. It was "For Giafar al Barmeki, from the Princess Abassa." He could have pressed the lines to his lips, but refrained, and read the following verses in Arabic, written in fair and feminine characters:—

"I had resolved to keep my love concealed within my bosom, but it escapes, and declares itself in despite of my efforts.

"The light wind as it visits thy dwelling carries with it my burning sighs, and the dew of midnight mingles with my tears, when I think upon thine image in the garden.

"Triumph, if you will, in my secret and my shame, but know the tyrant love reigns in my heart and moulds me at his will."

Giafar could hardly trust his senses as he read.

"Can it be? could she have written these lines?" were the thoughts that passed doubtfully across his mind.

"Art thou satisfied?" said the Commander of the Faithful.

"I am," was the hesitating reply. "My happiness is sealed. I shall await thy return impatiently, when I may obtain an honour so undeserved and unlooked for."

"Thy nuptials shall not be long delayed," said the calif. "And the spoils, it may be of royalty, shall grace them."

"May you return in safety and with honour, my most noble master," said the prince. "May your enemies be covered with confusion; may dust be upon their faces."

"Doubt it not," said Haroun. "Fear not but I shall take good account with the misbelieving dogs. Hast thou seen Jahia Ben Abdallah?" resumed the calif, after a short pause. "Hast thou seen that traitor, and dealt with him as I commanded thee?"

"Will my lord the calif pardon his slave?" replied the prince. "He has been unmindful of the duties which he owes to his master. Thoughts of thy goodness, and of the favour thou designest for him, have alone filled his bosom to-day. Save these, all else has passed from his remembrance. He has been forgetful even of himself."

"I will not chide thee, Giafar; but thou mayst

not dally in this matter, save at sore peril, as I fear, to the peace and welfare of my people. His skill and cunning, his restless ambition, his numerous and powerful friends, all call for prompt and decisive action. Delay not, then; but so soon as I have left the city, do quickly that which I have spoken. Bid the slaves pull lightly upon their oars; I would not yet land. So. I leave with thee, Giafar, mine own honour, and the happiness of my subjects. They will be well cared for; thou needst not assure me of it. My wife Zobeide and the Princess Abassa, I leave them likewise with thee. The relation in which thou now standest to them both, makes it of right thine office to protect and guard them. If sad, dissipate their sorrow by well-timed amusement, dancing and music, the hawk and hound. Minister to their slightest wishes, if within the limits of my power and honour they can be gratified. Thou mayst even see them at times, and enliven their sorrow with thy presence. I will not set thee bounds in this, but will confide in thy judgment, thy discretion. If I should not return from this war, (I sin thus to doubt the goodness of Allah, yet I will speak it,) if I should return no more, be a son, a husband to them. My sons, too—but of that I have spoken in my testament—thou wilt faithfully execute my wishes?”

“Fear it not, my most noble master,” exclaimed Giafar, pressing his lips to the calif’s hand, “my life is ever at thy service.”

"I do not fear it, Giafar. Thou seest this jewel," here the calif drew a ruby ring of great value from his finger, "it was a legacy from my father Mahadi, (upon whom be peace!) a pledge of my succession to the throne. Since it was given me it has never been in the possession of another. When a grasping and malicious brother, not content with the crown which as eldest born he had inherited, envied me the possession of this ring and sent to demand it of me, I refused to resign the treasure. I chose rather to commit it to the deep waters over which we are now gliding, and to the care of the genii who make their home in its caves. Well did they fulfil the trust. At the appointed time—but thou hast heard of its strange recovery from the bed of this river; thou wert then, I remember, far away in Khourdistan, yet the tale sure has oft been told thee. Since that time it has never parted from my finger. In battle it has been there, shining amid steel blades, and even when clothed with the sacred veil, when all worldly ornaments are put off from the body, as all vain thoughts should be banished from the mind, even at an hour so holy it never left my hand—'twas sacred!"

As he spoke, the calif carried the ring to his forehead, and strong emotion was visible in his countenance. Having overcome this, he gazed for a moment upon the jewel, and then pressing it to his bosom, continued, "I am not superstitious, as I think. I believe not in the tales of magic and enchantment that daily greet my ears, and confiding

as I do in the goodness of Allah towards his servants, I err in yielding thus to the gloomy forebodings which disturb my bosom as I resign this treasure into thy hands. Thou wonderest ; but thou heardest not the words which were addressed to me by the strange being who, from the caverns of the deep, rescued my long-lost treasure. They are yet ringing in mine ears. But take it—it is thine. It will give thee entrance into the inmost recesses of the palace. I could part with it, Giafar, to none but thee, and not to thee, but that I believe thy very wishes and passions are mine ; mine to control and direct—mine by the strong tenure of true allegiance and firm unalterable friendship.”

Giafar received the ring from Haroun in silence. His thoughts were too big for utterance, but as he pressed the hand of his master to his lips, he inwardly swore never to wrong his confidence, or to suffer temptation the most seducing to lead him from the strict path which friendship and honour called upon him to pursue. The calif rightly interpreted these mute asseverations, and placing his finger upon his lips, as an injunction of silence, remained buried in thought. Silently they gain the shore, silently they ascend from the river's edge, and silently seek together the royal palace.

CHAPTER VIII.

The man was noble,
But with his last attempt he wip'd it out.

Coriolanus.

ON the following morning the calif set forward to overtake the army. The prince bore him company for some leagues without the city; then, having taken a warm farewell of his master, returned to Bagdad. He returned to bury himself in the cares of government. It was with great difficulty, however, that he could quiet those fears, hopes, and regrets, those wild emotions which of late had made a chaos of his bosom. He felt himself unfit for the duties which had been assigned him. Love was his lord; at his high bidding he had become a slave, and the allegiance which he owed to another clashed harshly with the submission demanded of him by that exacting tyrant. But the temper of the prince was too firm, if not too upright, to be diverted by motives however powerful from employing all his zeal and activity in the service of his indulgent sovereign. Irksome as were the duties which awaited him in the execution of his trust, yet he bent to them with his accustomed energy; and until

the city had recovered from the excitement and disorder into which it had been thrown by the departure of the calif, he ventured hardly to bestow a thought upon his mistress.

The sentence of death which the Commander of the Faithful had passed upon Jahia Ben Abdallah was as yet unexecuted ; and although unwilling to be the instrument of his destruction, yet Giafar felt that the commands of his master were imperative, perhaps just, and he durst not disobey them. Accordingly he proceeded forthwith to their fulfilment.

It will be here necessary to explain at some length to the reader, the grounds upon which Jahia Ben Abdallah founded his claim to the califate, and to exhibit the strong hold which he had upon the affections of all Mussulmen, as lineally descended from Mohammed through his daughter Fatima, and from Ali his nephew, son-in-law, and vicegerent.

Ali, the son of Abu Taleb, was one of the earliest and most ardent supporters of Islamism. He was indeed the first who embraced its tenets, with the exception of Cadijah, the wife, and Zeid, the freedman of the Prophet. He was the peculiar favourite of that wonderful enthusiast or impostor, who dignified him with the title of friend, brother, and vicegerent, and gave him to wife his beloved daughter. Although during the lifetime of Mohammed he was looked upon as his legitimate and expected successor, it was not until that high station had been occupied by three intermediate califs, Abubeker, Omar, and Othman, that his right

was recognised and his merit rewarded. After the murder of Othman, whom he in vain endeavoured to defend from his enemies, he succeeded to the califate.

Yet his heroic valour and unequalled eloquence could not secure his government from the assaults of faction and rebellion. A conspiracy was formed against him by two powerful chiefs who had been his rivals for the califate. Having suppressed this, he turned his arms against a more dangerous competitor, who arose in the person of Moawiyah, of the house of Ommaides, a relative of the preceding calif, who had appointed him governor of Syria. Under the pretence of avenging the death of his kinsman, he displayed for his standard the skirt* of Othman stained with his blood, and having collected an army of fourscore thousand men, proclaimed himself calif, and prepared to sustain his title and prosecute his revenge.

Ali advanced against him, and in numerous sanguinary though indecisive engagements bore off the advantage. To spare the effusion of Moslem blood he proposed to terminate their quarrel by single combat, but Moawiyah durst not encounter the sword of his invincible rival, the "Lion of God ever victorious,"† as the Prophet himself had named him.

* The fingers of his wife were pinned to it; they had been cut off while vainly endeavouring to defend him.

† Then Ali called out to Moawiyah, "How long shall the people lose their lives between us? Come hither, I challenge you to appeal to the decision of God." Whereupon Amrou said

In a severe battle which ensued the victory was snatched from the grasp of the lawful calif by an artifice of Moawiyah. At the instigation of his lieutenant, the crafty Amrou, he caused his wavering soldiers to advance with leaves of the Koran fastened to their lances' points, crying out, "This is the book which should decide our differences. This is the book of God between us and you." Upon this the troops of Ali threw down their arms, and the quarrel of the two rivals became the subject of arbitration and treaty. By these Ali was deprived of Syria, a considerable and wealthy portion of his kingdom, and not long after suffered death in a mosque at Cufa, by the hand of a fanatical assassin.

His eldest son Hassan, a man of amiable and pacific disposition, resigned the califate to Moawiyah, and retired to the solitude of a cell near the tomb of his father. Hosein, his youngest brother, was of a different temper. After the death of Moawiyah, at the solicitation of his adherents in Cufa, he crossed the desert with a slight guard, expecting them to rise in great numbers at his appearance. In this he was disappointed. His messenger at Cufa was betrayed and slain. Obeidollah, the governor of that city for Yezid, the son and successor of Moawiyah, had discovered and suppressed the threatened insurrection, and on the

to Moawiyah, "Your cousin has made you a fair proffer." Moawiyah said it was not fair, because that Ali knew that no man ever came out against him, but he killed him.—*Ockley, Hist. Saracen.*

plain of Kerbela, Hosein was surrounded by a body of five thousand horse under the command of Amer the son of Sadi.

"Amer drew up his men," says the historian,* "in the evening of the ninth day of the month Moharram, and came up to Hosein's tent, who was sitting in his door just after evening prayer. As they were advancing, he was leaning upon his sword asleep. His sister Fatima came and waked him, and as he lifted up his head he said, 'I saw the Prophet in my dream, who said, Thou shalt rest with us.' Then she struck her face, and said, 'Wo be to us!' Conditions were denied him by his enemies, and he was summoned to submit himself unreservedly to the mercy of the calif. He desired till morning ere he returned an answer, a favour which was reluctantly granted him, one of Amer's men saying, 'that if a Deilamite, a nation which they mortally hated, had asked such a small request, it ought not to have been refused.' His sister came to him in the night, sighing and weeping over the ruin of their race. 'Alas!' she said, 'for the desolation of our house! I wish I had died yesterday, rather than have lived till to-day; my mother Fatima is dead, and my father Ali, and my brother Hassan! Alas! for the destruction that is past, and the dregs of it that yet remain behind.' Hosien endeavoured to calm and encourage her, and replied, 'Sister, put your trust in God, and depend upon the comfort that comes from him;

* Ockley.

and know that everything shall perish but the presence of God, who created all things by the word of his power, and shall make them return, and they shall return to him alone. My father was better than I, and my mother was better than I, and my brother was better than I; and I, and they, and every Mussulman has an example in the apostle of God.' He then represented to his friends that he was the only victim which his enemies required, and desired them to leave him, and depart in safety to their homes; but Alalibas told him they would not, and said, 'God forbid we should ever see the time wherein we should survive you!' Finding that they would not be persuaded, he commanded his followers to cord their tents close together, and fortify them with a trench, so that they should not be surrounded. The remainder of the night was spent in prayer and supplication, while the horsemen of the enemy were riding round about their encampment.

In the morning, having washed and anointed, he perfumed himself with musk, and then mounted on horseback, placing the Koran before him. His little band numbered only thirty-two horse and forty foot; but their slight intrenchment rendered them inaccessible to the horsemen, excepting only in front. The enemy, from compassion, hesitated to commence the combat, and one chief deserted with thirty followers, all choosing the rather to meet death with Hosein than to share the victory with his foes. Various single combats were fought,

in all of which Hosein's men were superior, "because they fought like men that were resolved to die." In each close encounter, likewise, the Fate-mite were invincible, and their enemies were invariably repulsed by their courage or despair. A body of archers were then brought up, who poured in their arrows upon them so thickly, that all of Hosein's horsemen were dismounted and many killed.

After a short truce, which was allowed for the noon prayers, the fight again recommenced, the enemy still keeping aloof and discharging their arrows, until all of Hosein's followers were severally slain. Overcome with fatigue, he then sat down at the door of his tent, for his reluctant enemies hesitated to attack him. His little son Abdallah, whom he had taken upon his lap, and his nephew, "a beautiful child with jewels in his ears," who ran forth from the tent to embrace him, were both killed in his arms. His mouth was presently pierced with a dart while drinking, and lifting up to Heaven his hands, which were filled with the blood of the children, and his own, for some moments he was lost in prayer. An officer of the enemy, the relentless Shamer, now encouraged his men to surround him. As they approached "he threw himself into the middle of them, charging sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left, and whichever way he turned himself, they flew off like so many deer before a lion. At last one wounded him upon the hand, a second upon the

neck, while a third thrust him through with a spear. When he was searched there were found upon him three-and-thirty wounds and four-and-thirty bruises."

His body was trampled by their horses' into the earth; the head being first cut off and sent to Obeidollah. The brutal governor sent it upon the mouth with a cane.* "Alas!" claimed an aged Mussulman, "upon these lips I seen the lips of the Apostle of God." The tomb of Ali and of Hosein "the martyr" are to this day annually visited by their votaries, and the death of the latter is celebrated by the most elegant lamentations.

The affecting interest of the preceding relation might perhaps alone excuse its insertion here; besides this it will serve to exhibit the estimation which the children of the Prophet's daughter and of his nephew, are held by the followers of the house of Ali; and to show how that estimation heightened and increased, even to veneration, by the recital or remembrance of the cruelties which have been inflicted upon the most meritorious and that excellent family. The story of the "Disaster of Kerbela" must excite the coldest to pity, and the mention of the name rouses in the bosom of a Mussulman the wildest emotions of sorrow and revenge. Even yet, the admirers and adherents of that family, as they meet annually together, exalt its merits

* Gibbon.

recount its sufferings, until grief rises into phrensy, and difference in doctrine becomes a ground for bitter and unforgiving hostility. From the opposite opinions as to the superiority of Ali over all the other successors of the Prophet arises the great schism which still divides the Mohammedan church. The Sonnites, or orthodox, of whom are the Ottomans, esteem the four first califs alone as legitimate imams, and hold them equal : while the Schiites, or heretics, of which number are the Persians of the present day, passing by Abuleke, Omar, and Othman, look upon Ali as the first lawful pontiff, a title which they likewise bestow upon Hassan, Hosein, and the offspring of Hosein to the ninth generation. In all parts of Islam, the descendants of the Prophet are distinguished by peculiar privileges. Even in the Ottoman empire they are the only hereditary nobility ; they are entitled to wear a green turban, and to be judged by their chief alone ; the meanest and poorest of that house, though clothed in rags, bears the title of emir, or prince, and the most excellent of the race are thought to be more highly gifted than angels.

Of this noble yet unfortunate family was Jahia Ben Abdallah a descendant. He was the grandson of Hassan, the eldest son of Ali, whose right as firstborn, though obscured, and in some measure superceded by the merit and martyrdom of his brother Hosein, still gave to his descendant a claim to the respect and affection, if not the homage of all Islam. The house of Abbas,

however, was not without other rights to the throne than those of actual possession. They are descended from an esteemed uncle of the Prophet, and when the first calif of that race raised his standard against the white banner of the house of Ommeyah, he was welcomed as the avenger of the Fatemites; and the gloomy colours which he had chosen were assumed in real or affected mourning for their misfortunes. Well were their injuries avenged; the house of Abbas triumphed, and the blood of the Ommiades drenched the streets of Damascus. A single youth of that family alone escaped, and eluding the pursuit of his enemies traversed Egypt and Mauritania, crossed the Mediterranean into Spain, and founded at Cordova the dynasty of the Ommiades, which for more than two centuries held possession of that fair country.

The power which the Abassides had thus acquired they still retained, and for successive generations they had ruled the East, feared by their enemies, beloved and respected by their subjects, and swaying the sceptre with a hand so firm and vigorous, as to strengthen their power and consolidate it upon the firmest basis. Relying, however, upon the estimation in which his family was held, urged on by hope and ambition, Jahia had thrown himself into the conflict, and during the reign of the present warlike and energetic monarch had raised a body of troops, and proclaimed himself calif in the provinces of Georgian and Di-

lem, drawing after him a great number of followers. Fadhel, the elder brother of Giafar, a commander of great ability, had been sent against the rebel, who surrendered to him, having first obtained pardon for his adherents, immunity for his own offence, with the promise of an honourable maintenance at the capital. This treaty had been ratified by Haroun, and Jahia, having pledged fidelity to the calif, came and dwelt in Bagdad.

His life, hitherto, had been retired and apparently blameless. If there was aught in his conduct which demanded scrutiny or deserved punishment, it had escaped the vigilance of the vizier, and knowing the hasty jealousy of the calif's temper, Giafar feared that his commands respecting Jahia might be the result of ill-founded suspicion, and that to fulfil them would blemish his master's honour, of which he was as careful as of his own. He was also not without reluctance to shed that blood which is so sacred to all Mohammedans, unless for a crime clearly shown and well deserving such punishment. But choice was not allowed him. Unwillingly, therefore, and with hesitating steps, accompanied by a slave, he bent his way towards the dwelling of Jahia, for the purpose of executing the sentence which Haroun had passed against him.

It was on the very day upon which the calif had left the city. He had chosen an hour which the indolence of Asiatic manners devotes to seclusion and repose—an hour past midday—when he should

not fail of finding his victim. When he arrived at the abode of Jahia, he entered the outer gate without knocking or giving any notice of his approach, and having crossed the court, presented himself at an inner door which gave admission into the more retired portion of the building. A slave there met him, of whom he required to see his master. "He is in the harem, my lord," answered the slave; a reply which, even in matters of more than ordinary importunity, is sufficient in Eastern countries to deter a visiter from pressing his errand. Giafar heeded it not, however, but bending a stern glance upon the slave, bade him inform his master that the vizier required his presence. The slave withdrew, and in a few moments Jahia entered the apartment. He was a man rather beyond the prime of life. He was tall and strong of frame; his dark eye, small and full of motion, denoted the craft which was said to make up a good portion of his character; his chin, far advancing and square, spoke firmness and resolution; while his beard, slightly grizzled, and so trimmed as to project considerably forward, added to the expression of this feature, and rendered it predominant over every other. He wore a dark-coloured caftan, a vest of crimson, and trousers of white. His turban was green, the colour of the house of Ali, and the distinguishing mark of an emir or descendant of the Prophet. He seemed pale and disturbed; his dress was disordered, as though he had just risen from repose, and evinced the hurry and perturba-

tion of mind which prevented him from receiving his guest with that form and dignity which were his due. A thrill as of fear was visible in his countenance, when his eye, after resting for a moment upon the stern features of the prince, who had not yet spoken, turned to his swarthy attendant.

"Thou tremblest," thus Giafar addressed him ; "why fearest thou? Is it the consciousness of guilt which causeth thee thus to dread my presence?"

"The hour is unusual, my lord, and of itself would tell me that thine errand is of no common kind; thy brow, too, thus fixed and frowning, which I will remind thee thou hast not worn to me of late, and—" Here he glanced at the slave, and his silence was full of meaning.

"Jahia, son of Hassan, thou shouldst clothe thyself with more firmness. Be mine errand with thee what it may, thou shouldst hear it as becomes a man, and one who is well descended."

"But the time, my lord! thus sudden; when the mind is all unbent—but a moment since surrounded by those dearest to me—wife, children. But I have ill said," he added, checking his emotion; "what matters it the hour? Speak out thine errand, Prince Giafar, since it must be."

Giafar was moved by the words and manner of Jahia, and he hesitated ere he produced the fatal mandate. In a moment, however, he held forth to him the order of the calif for his death, saying, as he placed it in his hands,

"'Tis written here."

"How! Death!" exclaimed Jahia, after he had glanced at the writing. "Why? for what? How have I deserved this fate?"

"Thou needst not ask?" was the reply. "The sentence, thou seest, has gone forth, and questioning cannot avail thee."

"It cannot be, my lord," said Jahia, collecting himself, and speaking firmly, without faltering, or show of fear. "My safety is shielded by the promise of a noble and generous monarch. He could not prove thus faithless to himself. 'Twere treason against his honour to credit it."

"Thine unbelief will not save thee, Jahia; thy fate is sealed. Yet I will not unduly hasten it. Retire for a space; perform thine ablutions, repeat thy last prayers to Heaven, and then submit with firmness to that doom which thou canst neither resist nor avoid."

"I will not suffer in silence the execution of an unjust decree," was the reply. "I will not yield up my life without calling heaven and earth to witness that I am innocent of aught which deserves such punishment, that I am the victim of falsehood and treach—"

Giafar made a slight motion to the slave, which, however, did not escape the notice of the hapless Jahia. His firmness instantly forsook him, and throwing himself in a posture of supplication at the prince's feet, he exclaimed,

"A moment wait, my lord—till thou hast heard

me. If thou wilt pursue thy purpose, if I must suffer, at least refuse not to listen to a few words which I would fain utter in proof of my innocence."

"Speak, then," was the reply; "though the short time which yet remains to thee were better spent in repentance of thy sins and prayers to Allah."

"I speak to one who, like Allah, hath power to dispense life and pardon; one who is just and merciful."

"Thou speakest a worm to his fellow-worm. But rise, address me as man should his equal; the slave hath no power over his brother but as my lord the calif has commanded."

Jahia then rose, and spoke as follows:

"I need not remind thee, my lord, that when I surrendered my person into the hands of thy brother Fadhel, I was at the head of a numerous band of followers. Though inferior in numbers to the army which thy brother commanded, they were nevertheless faithful and resolute, and thou well knowest might have contended obstinately and with some prospect of success for the great prize, to gain which I had perilled my fortune and my life."

The prince, by an inclination of the head, assented.

"Though the chance of war seemed against me, yet the cause which I had espoused was far from desperate. A fortunate encounter, a midnight

surprise, nay, a single blow against thy brother's life—and he did not spare himself in the strife—might have rendered me victorious, and would have filled my ranks with thousands who needed but the least glimmering of success to range themselves under my standard. Thus stood my affairs when I proposed to surrender myself into the power of thy brother, upon condition that my life should be spared, and that I should be sent to the court of the calif, there to reside upon an ample maintenance which should be assigned me from the royal treasury. True it is, my lord, that had I been conquered in the war, my life had been forfeited, perhaps those of my whole house, or, at least, want and misery had been their portion. I will not deny that fears like these in some degree governed me in my course. Had they not done so, instead of standing before thee under an unjust sentence of death, I might now be giving laws to Islam. Thou smilest, Prince Giafar—the caprice of fortune and of war have been stranger than this ere now. But it is idle thus to speak. My offer of surrender was accepted by thy brother, confirmed by the calif, and protected, as I thought, by the faith of a noble monarch. I disbanded my followers, and gave up my person, and was sent hither to dwell in Bagdad. Here have I lived, a peaceful subject of the calif, honouring his dignity, submitting to his power, and in all things comporting myself as a loyal and true Mussulman. If either in word or deed I have done otherwise than

this, I have forfeited my right to protection. Let it be shown that I am thus guilty, and I will give up my life into thy hands without a murmur. Until then I am shielded by the calif's word even from his own anger."

The cold damp which stood in drops upon his forehead disappeared ; a faint flush stole upon his brow, and the pallor of his cheek was usurped by a crimson that hurried thither, and passing, returned again as quickly while he observed the emotion and hesitation that clothed the features of the prince. His voice, too, which despair had rendered calm and steadfast, now became tremulous with hope. He continued earnestly—

"Think, my lord, upon the honour of thy house—regard, too, that of the calif. How will both be stained should the life of one, even though an enemy, be sacrificed in defiance of a sacred pledge to the promptings of ill-founded and unjust suspicion? Thy master's name for truth and uprightness will vanish ; the title which he now bears of 'Just,' and which, if report speaks truth, he prizeth above all price, will be lost and torn from him. Men will brand him as a tyrant, and future ages hold up to scorn and detestation that monarch whose fame now fills the measure of the world."

Jahia perceived that Giafar was moved, and without giving him time to reply, he fell at his feet, and seizing the border of his garment, addressed him in these words, which are said by the historian to have affected the prince to such a degree that he

was induced to abandon his design, and spare the life of Jahia, although in opposition to the command of his master : *"Fear God, and be not of the number of those who at the day of judgment will have the Prophet for their enemy, for that they have dipped their hands in the innocent blood of his descendants."*

"Rise, Jahia," replied the prince. "For the present, thy life is safe. I may incur the anger of the calif in slighting his commands, but I would not for the kingdoms of this world, that when in the presence of the judge, my book is opened, it should be found written therein, that a single drop of that blood has been shed unjustly by my hand. Yet give good heed to thy ways. Let not ambition tempt thee from thine allegiance. Choose not treachery for thy portion. Punishment walks with it hand in hand, and will not fail to visit thee, though the merits of thy whole race should plead for thee. Nay, rise," continued Giafar, for Jahia still knelt at his feet pouring forth his gratitude in oaths of fidelity, and in boundless wishes for the prince's welfare—"rise; if thou wouldst indeed repay me, prove by thy life and actions that in thus sparing thee I have not erred. Continue or become a faithful subject, so shall I escape the anger of the calif, and rejoice that I have granted thee thy life, even though in defiance of his vigorous commands."

Renewing his protestations of innocence and thanks, Jahia rose, and summoning his slaves, commanded them to spread a rich collation, and

directed one of their number to bring a costly robe, with which he would have clothed the prince.

Giafar coldly refused this mark of Jahia's gratitude, saying, "I will neither eat nor drink in thy house, nor receive any favour at thy hands, until thou art cleared of this stain. Farewell! keep thyself far from treachery and deceit. If thou art already implicated in such guilt, withdraw thyself quickly from it. 'Tis a snare which will prove thy ruin. Thus shalt thou preserve thy life, and render me blameless in having spared it." Having thus said, without remaining to listen to the reiterated vows of fidelity and gratitude which Jahia poured forth, the prince departed.

"Can he deceive me?" thought Giafar, as he returned slowly homeward. "I will watch him closely—I may have erred in dealing thus mercifully with him, and should evil come of it, hardly shall I excuse my conduct to the calif. Yet it is better thus. Rather should ten guilty ones escape punishment, than one innocent suffer unjustly. I think not, in truth, that his balance in the next world will be light, who in this has in aught dealt unjustly by the offspring of the most holy Prophet. Peace be upon him!"

CHAPTER IX.

And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature.

COLERIDGE.

Not far from the city dwelt a dervish famed for his sanctity and austerity, who had given up the interests of this world, and in solitude devoted himself unceasingly to religious contemplation. He was of the order of the *Öulwanys*, and was supposed to have been instructed in the rules of the fraternity by the founder of the order, that blessed *scheick* himself. It was about ten years since he first took possession of his rude cell. His temporal necessities had been continually supplied by the piety and generosity of the citizens, and neither want nor curiosity, during the course of that time, had drawn him from his seclusion.

The spot which he had chosen for his retreat seemed framed by nature for his hallowed purpose. It was a spacious cave, which lay deep in the side of a mountain, formed by huge rocks, piled irregularly one upon the other, the entrance to which was sheltered and narrowed by trees that on all sides, above and around, were dipping their boughs into its gloomy area. Lofty cedars and palms

bristled up the ascent of the mountain, while at its base, the dark cypress and the trist willow drooped their heads over a small but beautiful lake. From the side of the mountain, many a hurrying rivulet leaped joyously into its bosom, making in its fall sweet music for the peris, if any there were, that inhabited the depths to which it hastened.

One of these streams had with apparent self-denial left its companions, and turned aside from its course to pass near the cave of the dervish. Here, with ceaseless labour, it had framed a rude basin of stone, for the wants of the recluse, which having filled even to overflowing, as though conscious of delay, it sped with redoubled velocity to rejoin its companions. Here the old man performed his daily ablutions, and from its benevolent stream refreshed the few herbs and flowers which he reared in an adjacent garden. Yet, notwithstanding this expenditure of its waters, the bed of that fountain was never dry, and to many it seemed a miracle that in the long heats of summer, when the waters of the lake became diminished and low, when every other source was withheld, which might give freshness and coolness to its bosom, that stream still poured unceasingly its generous current. It was a beautiful illustration of the merit and reward of almsgiving, that duty so oft inculcated in the Koran; and engraven in the rock, upon its margin, was this appropriate verse from its blessed pages :

“If ye make your alms appear, it is well; but if ye conceal them, and give them unto the poor, this

will be better for you, and will atone for your sins, for Allah is well informed of what ye do."

Beautifully variegated fish inhabited the lake, which might be seen shining and flashing far down through its clear waters, and clustering around the green rocks. They were sacred. The entreaties of the good man had obtained for his finny favourites immunity from the treacherous arts of the fisherman; and what had at first been granted as a favour was soon claimed as a right, until, in process of time, it was considered sacrilege to take them. This superstition was strengthened by the belief that mysterious ties existed between the dervish and the inhabitants of those waters. For at noonday, attracted by the freshness of the stream which entered the lake close by the good man's cell, they might be seen crowding to the shore where he stood. Often would he feed them with his hands, and, if rumour might be trusted, in some strange tongue hold converse with them. Some there were, who asserted that while looking upon the surface of the lake, its waters had become agitated, the old man had appeared rising from its waves, and moving on his way as in an element most familiar to him. These strange rumours injured in no degree the reputation of the recluse for sanctity, which was unbounded; nay, there were many who esteemed more highly the old man's virtues, when they supposed him to possess some power, or art, beyond the ordinary limits of our nature.

His learning was extensive. None equalled him in ancient lore, none knew so well the customs and manners of foreign lands, and none explained and commented on the Koran with the fervour and clearness of Scheick Ibrahim. Many a repentant Moslem has returned from the holy father's cell, lightened of his sorrow, and cheered by the words of the book of promise, as they have been adapted to his spiritual wants by the ingenuity of that good man. The armed warrior, when going forth to fight the battles of the Most High, oft stooped from his caparisoned steed to receive the blessing of Allah, at the hands of his aged servant. Many a lovely Persian maiden has stolen from the gay walls of the harem, to seek the sacred solitude of his dwelling; often for the comforts of religion, but oftener to enjoy the freer air of those delightful woods, and to talk with one who could tell them tales of distant lands, varying thus pleasingly the monotony of their secluded lives. Attentively would they listen, as he rehearsed to them the bold and masculine manners of the Western dames, how they scrupled not to go unveiled, to sit in the assembly of warriors, and to crown the conqueror with their own fair hands; and at the recital they would blush and rail. Yet oftener pure religion was the sage's theme, and that excellent philosophy, which, if it cannot sweeten the cup of misfortune, can, by its influence, render him that drinketh insensible to its bitterness.

Hither had the beautiful Abassa often wandered,

to minister to the temporal necessities of the recluse, and to receive instruction from his lips. Various were his lessons; astrology, history, tales of foreign countries, their climes, their manners, and their wonders, all were imparted to her, and in a style which showed that the narrator had in person beheld those things which he recounted. He had instilled into her mind the principles of religion, and told her that its aim was to make man tolerant and happy. He had taught her to judge with lenity of the faults of others, and was well pleased to see the delight with which her pure and flexible spirit received these truths. Her presence was always welcome to the good old man, nor was the princess's pleasure less in listening to the sage's lessons. It was no task to her to pass long hours in his cell, and while she revered him for his sanctity, repeated and delightful intercourse taught the maiden to love him as a parent and an instructor.

Why comes she trembling now? what is it moves her? Her attendants are left without the wood; she has descended from her litter, and proceeds on foot towards the sage's cell. For the first time she comes with a lingering step. Now she hesitates upon her path, and seems to doubt whether to proceed or to retrace the road. Then, as with an effort conquering her timidity, she hurries forward to gain the cell, ere her fears again rally to oppose her progress. Why is this? whence proceeds this irresolution? Why, when she has

reached the cave, does she recoil, as though some robber of the desert lay there concealed? She is not the same Abassa that she once was. Then, as she came bounding along to meet the scheick, how light and joyous was her step, and how mirthful her countenance! But she is all changed. That bosom where peace dwelt, is now tenanted by a passion that can brook no rival in power, that is rarely content until he has reduced, under his imperious sway, every thought, every wish, every hope. He enters, too, with a restless train of jealousies and fears, which, eager to assert the supremacy of their master, are active in expelling those calmer inmates, that fill yet oppress not the bosom.

When she left her home to seek the sacred city the very birds were not so happy—so careless as she. She knew not sadness then, for she knew not love. The attention of the vizier Giafar, his care for her safety and comfort upon that trying journey, had sunk deeply into her heart, while his accomplishments had interested and delighted her. She ventured not to interpret his soft tones, his now earnest, now hesitating language, as an evidence of his admiration; yet from that moment so critical to them both, when she beheld his eyes fastened in rapture upon her unveiled countenance, she could doubt no longer. She sighed to herself the secret that she *was* beloved. She had now found, as it were, a key to that subject of which she had ignorantly read so much, of which poets

had written, and she had dreamed. Verses which she had formerly sung sweetly, yet without thought, now covered her face with blushes, and filled her bosom with a strange confusion.

What wonder was it that she should hesitate, that she should tremble as she drew near the dwelling of the recluse. The thought, though it were but half formed, of concealment, threw around her an air of distrust, which affected her deportment the more that she was unaccustomed to its influence. When she last left the old man her bosom kept from him no secret; he read there as in a book displayed, all—even her most secret thoughts. But now, love had written there with a pen of fire, had timorously rolled up the scroll, and had sealed it with his own seal. How mysterious are his ways! These frail barriers to the strong hand of authority become like iron—they yield not to force. Friendship, with its gentle and dexterous touch, can alone undo them, and disclose a secret thus defended.

She knocked lightly at the rude door of the cave, and a voice from within was heard saying "Enter. Thou art welcome, daughter," exclaimed the venerable man, who came forward to meet her with gladness beaming in his countenance—"welcome as the morning to him that watcheth. But why hast thou tarried thus from my poor dwelling? 'Tis long since thou hast honoured it with thy presence."

"Ah, say not honoured!" exclaimed Abassa;

"how can mortal honour that which is consecrated to Heaven? When I first entered this cell I felt like some unhallowed thing, passing within the enclosure of a sanctuary. I feel thus still, and though thy kind care, thy soothing words, have in part dispelled that awe, yet the charm is not all broken—nor would I wish it, for 'tis woven, as I think, by no malicious power—but thy blessing, father."

"The blessing of Allah be upon thee, my child, and the presence of his holy Apostle, upon whom be salvation and the peace of God!" said the dervis, his face being towards the holy city, and his arms extended over the bending form of the princess.

"I had need of thy blessing, father," said Abassa, heaving a long repressed sigh; "my bosom is now lighter than it was."

"What troubleth thee, maiden? Why hast thou not sought my presence ere this? Many days have elapsed since thou hast returned from Mecca. I thought that the sun would not rise and set upon thee in Bagdad, until thou hadst visited my cell. I have looked daily for thee, and I knew not before how much the happiness of an old man depended upon creatures of clay." A tear was visible in the eye of the sage, and he spoke in a reproachful tone, which melted at once the heart of the maiden.

"Forgive me!" she exclaimed; "not a day has passed since my return that I have not purposed

to visit thy solitude, but there has been that *here* that has kept me back." As the princess said this she pressed her hand upon her bosom, and added, "I feared to come."

"Feared! my daughter," said the scheick; "none but the wicked fear this solitude. But tell me, what has troubled thus thy peace? Wilt thou not answer?" Her features mantled with crimson and she answered not. "The air is cool and balmy," continued the old man, in a kind of encouraging tone; "come, let us walk together under the shade of yon palm trees; there thou wilt unfold to me all that is concealed within thy breast, and fear not that the bosom of Scheick Ibrahim is an unsafe depository for the secrets of a maiden."

Abassa led the way. She had drawn aside her veil while in the cave for the purpose of seeing with more distinctness the features of her venerable friend, and when she came into the open day heeded not that her face was still uncovered. Well was it for the happiness of Father Ibrahim that his thoughts were fixed on Heaven—that, buried in devotion, he heeded not the outward form and beauty of woman. Yet many there are, I ween, who would deem it a surer safeguard to his peace, that age had chilled with its ice the old man's bosom, and staid with a palsying hand the sluggish current in his veins. To what a drear cold region are we all hastening! The chill which binds the Arctic in ice equals it not. Let the warm sun shine down upon its chains, and they are at

once dissolved, but beauty's noon cannot release from its icy fetters imprisoned age.

The sage looked upon her sunny beauty unmoved, yet with admiration, for an unusual colour had come to her cheek that day. Benevolence swelled in his bosom as he gazed upon her. It was as though his eye had rested with delight upon some fair edifice: it was not his; yet he had adorned it with his own hands, he had embellished it with furniture costly and rare, and he looked anxiously that it should find an owner worthy of the fair possession—one who would prize it as he ought. Yet for him, content dwelt within his humble cell. The sun had declined well down the horizon—the breeze came freshly through the waving boughs, roughening with its pure breath the lake. Hardly a sound was heard around them—their very footsteps were distinctly audible, though they trod upon a carpet of soft verdure, with which nature had clothed the borders of the mountain. The hour was sweet—its influence sank into their souls. “How delightful is this retirement!” said the hermit; “could you not give up the world to live at peace in such a spot?”

“It is not permitted a Persian damsel to choose,” replied Abassa. “Thou hast told me that far away to the west, maidens devote their days to solitude and religion, but with us it is not so—why dost thou ask, father? Thou knowest I could not, if I would.”

“My question has no meaning beyond its sur-

face," answered the old man. "I would know what value thou placest upon this world and its pleasures. Couldst thou not resign them all, did religion require it of thee?"

"I could, I think—rich jewels and robes, our dear baths—yes, yes, I could—music—the song of our poets, and—" She blushed and hesitated.

"Tell me freely, my child," said the recluse, "couldst thou not?"

"Do not try my spirit, father," answered the maiden. "Thou knowest how dear this life is to me, thou hast thyself done much to render it so. Thou hast stored my mind with knowledge, thou hast taught me to study the heavens and the earth, and as in a scroll unfolded, read there with delight. My father, my mother, friends well beloved, bind me here. The ear, the eye, every sense brings to me some pleasure, and thou thyself hast told me to enjoy them. Thou hast told me how oft man's folly defeats the benevolent designs of Heaven, and that abstinence and satiety are equally crimes; why should I deprive myself of all these? besides, I am not mine own."

"No, thy father's."

"Not his, good Ibrahim; he has given me to another."

"Another?"

"Promised me, I meant to say."

The blood recoiled to the maiden's heart as she spoke, and her cheek and lips were left pale, while a strange mingling of sensations, of which pleasure

made up the greatest part, forced a tear down her cheek, that had by this time regained its colour. She wiped the moisture from her eyes, and covering her face with her veil, sought to hide those feelings which a maiden would conceal from all but her lover. Father Ibrahim mistook her emotion, and with the deepest interest inquired to whom she was betrothed. He received no answer. "Art thou to be sent far away, a victim of state policy, to be made the seal of an alliance with some powerful tyrant that will not know thy worth?"

"Who is there to whom my father would consign me?" replied the princess. "The emperors of Roum and Frangistan are infidels, and he would turn with disdain as I should with horror from such an alliance. The princes of Spain and Egypt, though professors of our holy faith, are enemies of the house of Abbas. No, I am to remain with you."

"Allah be praised!" exclaimed the dervis. "I was a fool to think it. No one that knows thy worth would part with thee, and thy father loves thee well. But who is there worthy of thy hand?"

"Knowest thou no one that may deserve me?" said the maiden, timidly.

"Yes, there is *one*, thine equal in every quality, save that a busy intercourse with this rude world has made stern his soul and rendered him less gentle, less mild than *he* should be to whose keeping thy happiness is to be intrusted. I speak of Giafar al Barmeki."

"Thou hast guessed rightly, father," said the

maiden, tremblingly—"it is he. I am glad that thou thinkest highly of him."

"Can it be!" exclaimed the old man. "Has Heaven granted my prayer? I rejoice to hear it. Allah be praised! He alone is worthy of thee."

"Am I not fortunate, then," said the princess, after a short silence—"fortunate as the damsels of the West, that wait not to be wooed, but boldly court the husband of their choice?"

"Fortune has indeed smiled upon thee," rejoined the sage, "if thine own wishes respond to thy father's will, if thy heart is given where thou must per force bestow thy hand. Yet speak not so harshly of European maidens. Accuse them not of forward boldness. Their cheeks would redden at the charge."

"I speak but as thou hast told me, father," said Abassa.

"Thou hast strangely misinterpreted my words. In their speech, modesty and restraint reign unceasingly, and if they woo, 'tis but with bright glances, and the winning attitudes of their lovely forms."

"It matters little, good father. Is there not a voice in the eyes as intelligible and powerful as speech? Methinks neither with looks nor words should a maiden woo a lover. The rose invites not him that is without to enter and pluck it from its stem, neither when he approaches who has permission from the master of the garden, does its bloom heighten or its fragrance increase to entice him."

"But were it thy doom to be sent far away, as

the bride of some prince thou hadst never known or beheld, wouldst thou not then envy the liberty which the maidens of the West enjoy?"

"I cannot tell," answered Abassa. "Freedom that we know not, we do not desire. I have long looked upon my fate as in my father's hands, and have rested secure. Even were that lot mine of which you speak, I might be content. I could bear it I think. But I will not nerve my mind to evils that present themselves not. My father's kindness has fixed me here. The plant flourishes yet where it has been reared; when the wind scattereth its leaves, may they be strewn upon the plain it has adorned."

"Hark!" said Father Ibrahim, as the distant voice of the muezzin gained his ear, "to prayer! to prayer! Hear you not the holy summons?"

They both knelt upon a small carpet, which the hermit spread upon the ground, and said the namaz of the afternoon. The prayer over, they rose, and perceived they were not alone in their devotions.

"Who can it be kneeling yonder?" said Father Ibrahim, who first discovered the presence of the intruder. "Remain here, my child, I will accost him. Stay—he rises—'tis the Prince Giafar. Mine eyes have not looked upon him these many moons. Shall he not approach?"

"As thou willest," said the maiden, adjusting carefully her veil. "My presence shall be no bar upon your wishes."

The old man, then, by his looks and gestures, invited the prince to draw near.

CHAPTER X.

In silence bowed the virgin's head ;
And if her eye was filled with tears,
That stifled feeling dared not shed,
And changed her cheek from pale to red,
And red to pale, as through her ears
Those winged words like arrows sped ;
What could such be but maiden fears !

Bride of Abydos.

GIAFAR came forward, and stooping to the old man's feet, kissed the border of his garment. The customary salutation of peace then passed between the Princess Abassa and himself, accompanied by a mutual bend of courtesy, with the right hand to the breast, the prince carrying his hand to his forehead, and shading his eyes in token of great respect, as though in the presence of one too sacred to be gazed upon.

"I am in the presence of the Princess Abassa?" he said, inquiringly. An inclination of the head answered this interrogatory in the affirmative. "An idle question; veiled as thou art, fair lady, mine eyes would know thee amid a thousand. Allah shower down his choicest blessings on thee, and make thee happier even than thou art. How hast *thou* fared, good father?"

"Well, well, my son; though my mind would have been more at ease than it is, had I seen thee ere this. I feared lest I had been forgotten by some who are most dear to me."

"Thou couldst not think it, father," said the prince. "Business of much moment has kept me from thy solitude. The burden of state is upon my shoulders; I am wearied with its weight. Distracting thoughts, too, have been working upon my mind, and rousing it into phrensy. All these thou shalt know, yet do not reproach me."

"Nay, I complain not, my son, this life is not all sunshine. Rather is it 'a tempest in the night; at times it lightens, and at times we are left in darkness.' But why is thy bosom thus disturbed? Where is thy firmness, where thy fortitude, with which thou hast so often striven against the ills of life?"

"'Tis gone," replied the prince. "It has deserted me. My courage, too, has flown—nay, wonder not, I speak truly, father, or why am I here? Why am I not by the side of my noble master, now, when he has most need? It had not happened thus," he added, despondingly, "but that all manhood has left my bosom."

"Peace has its claims as well as war," said the princess. "Is it not duty that keeps thee here?"

"I thank thee, lady, for thy words. Thou art kind and gentle—thou wouldst pour balm into my wounds, and there is no hand can do it, save thine, on this side the grave. Yet I deserve not this

kindness from thee. Far from my thoughts were duty and honour when I wished to remain behind. When thy noble father consigned his kingdom to my charge, I murmured not. I might perchance have wrung from him his consent that I might share with my brave brothers the dangers of this war; but no entreaty, no prayer escaped my lips, for—why should I disguise the truth? though it might well shame me to confess it—here was I bound. Chains, strong though unseen, were fastened upon me, and held me here—nay, listen to me; I have much desired this meeting. I have long wished to see thee, to know from thine own lips my fate. Knowest thou this scroll?"

As the prince spoke, he held to view the letter which he had received from the princess, at the hands of her father. "Do not avert thy head. Is not the writing thine?"

"It is, my lord," replied Abassa, after a moment's hesitation.

"Didst thou, fairest lady, of thine own free will write these lines? or was it at the command of another?"

"Canst thou ask, Prince Giafar?" replied the maiden. "Thou deemest but lightly of my pride, if thou thinkest that, unadvised, nay, uncontrolled, I sent those lines to thee. They were dictated by one who has a right to guide my pen?"

"Thy father? I was sure of it," interrupted the prince.

"Thou art right," rejoined the maiden. "No-

thing but his rigorous command could have rendered me so forgetful of myself, so unmindful of the pride, the honour of a maiden."

"Yet had thy heart no part in what is written here? Stay—hear me for a moment. Thy father, thou knowest, offers me thy hand. The treasure is inestimable—its value cannot be told. To possess it there is no sacrifice that I would not make, no danger that I would not dare. But I would refuse even a boon so dear, unless of thine own choice thou wilt bestow it upon thy slave. A life of happiness were dearly purchased, by a single sigh or tear from thee. Yet give me to know that I have found favour in thine eyes, that in some little part thy soul has prompted the lines here written within this parchment; give me but to hope this, and my happiness is sealed."

The princess trembled, but answered nothing.

"Thou knowest not, fairest princess, the power thou hast over me. In visions of the night thou art present to my senses, and through the day thine image is ever near me. The pains of love of which I have often heard, but doubtingly, I now know to be realities; emotions that I once thought held their existence but in the poet's fancy, are now burning *here*."

As the prince said this, he placed his hand upon his bosom. His words glowed with love and pathos, his voice trembled, and he pressed his suit in a manner too impassioned to please the ears of the inexperienced maiden. She was about to

leave him, when he exclaimed, "Turn not away—listen to me yet a moment—nay, I will not, then, address thee in the language of passion, though were I thus to speak my words would breathe of fire. If thou wilt pass the pleasant hours with one who will be thy slave, if thou wilt reign queen of my palace and of my heart, speak but the word, and they are thine. Thou art skilled in all the accomplishments that can adorn thy sex. Thou art versed in the lore of the sage and of the poet. If these pleasures can tempt thee, they shall all be thine. Learning from all lands shall be brought to us—the sweetest poets shall sing their lays. Mansor and Isaac shall tune their sweet lutes, and the rich voice of Mousali shall beguile the hours away, if they should linger. Though bred to war, I am not a stranger to those pleasures which thou lovest so well, and thou wilt soften and refine me; thou wilt assimilate me to thyself, and daily I shall become more worthy of thee. In the winter thou shalt reign in my palace, and no pomp or pleasure which thou now enjoyest shall fail thee there. In the warm summer thou mayst wander upon the river's banks, and roam at will, through my spacious gardens that skirt its margin. I know they are unworthy of thee. If I could offer thee this world with its treasures, it were too poor a price to give in exchange for thee. Yet reject me not, for I offer to thee all."

Abassa spoke not. Her bosom heaved tumultuously, and one hand stole beneath her veil to wipe

away the tears that she felt trickling down her cheeks. "Wherefore dost thou hesitate?" continued the impassioned Giafar, persuasively. "Reject me not. Tell me that thou wilt be mine. Thou wilt not? Frame but one single word. Light of mine eyes! answer me, yes. Thou canst easily speak it. Thou wilt not reply then—thou wilt not!" exclaimed the prince, despairingly. "I cannot resign thee thus. If not with words, tell me with a look. If thou wilt accept me, if thou wilt not make me wretched, look up upon thy slave, turn but for a moment thine eyes upon him, and let him live."

Her veil was partly drawn aside, and slowly the beautiful princess turned her eyes upon him. For a moment they dwelt, they reposed on his. They were floating in tears, and though no other feature of her face was distinctly visible, in their sweet expression Giafar read all that he wished to know. In that glance were visible, love, dependence, confidence, and a thousand feelings that words well chosen and devised would have failed as perfectly to express. In a moment her eyes were again cast down, and her face covered completely with her veil. "I thank thee, Allah," exclaimed the vizier, tremulously, while he covered his face with his caftan, to conceal the emotions that were unmanning him.

Father Ibrahim had taken no part in this conversation, and had even withdrawn a few paces that his presence might lay no restraint upon their

meeting, yet not to so great a distance as to render the interview strictly a private one. But it had lasted longer, and was more free in its nature, than custom permitted to the sexes, and he now stepped forward to put an end to its privacy. Abassa noticed the intention of the dervis, and was instantly sensible of her error. "I will go, father," she said. "Do not blame me—I have erred, but it has been unthinkingly. Forget, my lord, that thou has seen and spoken with me. Let me not forfeit thine esteem—forget this casual meeting, and when my father shall return, his will shall in all things be mine."

"Forget it! now, by the right hand of our sacred Prophet! never can it pass from my remembrance. It has been the dearest moment of my life, and death alone with its gathering shadows can efface its memory. But thou hast erred in nothing—thou hast done naught that thine own father would not approve and sanction. He left me as the guardian of his household, gave me permission to see and speak at times, even with thee, and with the liberty he failed not to give the power to do so. Here is the proof that I deceive thee not; with this talisman the doors even of the harem open to me. Dost thou not know it?" As Giafar said this he pointed to a ruby ring which glittered upon his finger.

The princess gazed upon it intently, and the sight of the jewel seemed to awaken in her bosom strange and unusual emotion, in which Father

Ibrahim apparently participated. "That ring! whence had you it, my lord?" she exclaimed, eagerly.

"From thy father. He placed it in my hands the evening preceding his departure for the army."

"Strange! Did he present you with this as with an ordinary jewel, or was it reluctantly and with fear? Never thought I to see that ring on the finger of another."

"The calif seemed impressed with a strange dread as he consigned the jewel to my possession, and shuddering told me that it had been recovered in a mysterious manner from the waters of the Tigris. He spoke also of the being who brought his lost treasure from the deep, and of words uttered by him which still haunted his memory."

"Let me look upon the jewel," said the dervis. The old man gazed upon it attentively, then turning to the princess, said, "How long is it since the occurrence of this strange event?"

"It is about ten years since that memorable day," replied the princess.

"Wilt thou not tell the tale as it occurred, my daughter?"

"Most willingly," said Abassa. "Though but a child then, yet I have heard my father oft tell the story, and with an earnestness which has imprinted it for ever upon my memory."

They reclined at the foot of a spreading palm tree, and the princess commenced as follows:—

CHAPTER XI.

'Tis very strange.

Hamlet.

"THE ring which thou hast now upon thy finger, Prince Giafar, was a gift from my grandfather Mahadi to my father. It was a pledge of his succession to the throne, after the death of his brother Hadi, to whom as eldest born the kingdom of right descended. Mahadi died, (peace be with him!) and his eldest son succeeded to the crown. Yet scarcely was he seated upon the throne, when, forgetful of his father's wishes, he intrigued to transfer the succession from my father to his son Giafar, who at that time was a mere infant. The principal officers of the court were sounded and gained. All, with the exception of thy venerable father, were the ready and submissive instruments of the tyrant's ambition. The venerable Jahia alone remained firm. He was resolved to oppose so flagrant a violation of the will of the deceased calif, and as he held the office of vizier, and possessed reputation for great prudence and ability, his opposition was for a long time successful. 'Act not thus unjustly,' said thy father to the ambitious

calif, 'lest all Islam rise up against thee. The people will not reverence a child even though he be clothed with the mantle of the Prophet. One who cannot pray in the mosque, and exhort the Mussulmen to piety, who cannot lead our warriors to battle, and our pilgrims to the sacred city, merits not surely the title of Emirul Mumminn.* Beware, lest in trying to place the sceptre in the hands of thine offspring, it be wrested from thine own grasp.' The firmness of thy father was for a time sufficient to prevent the calif from openly pursuing his purpose. He craftily assented to his vizier's advice, and feigned to have banished from his mind his unjust design.

"Meanwhile my father's actions were closely watched. His friends were withdrawn, one by one, from about his person, and sent on various pretexts abroad, and he was surrounded by the creatures of the calif's will. All offices and posts of honour were denied him, neither was he allowed admission into the army, lest he should gain in a greater degree the affection of the soldiery, who already loved him, and whom, at the early age of nineteen, he had led to the walls of Constantino-ple.

"Yet all hope was not denied him. That sacred jewel, which might purchase an emir's ransom, was still in his possession. As often as he looked upon it his courage revived; for in it he beheld,

* Commander of the Faithful.

as it were, a pledge that he should outlive the snares with which his unnatural brother was surrounding him, and wear the crown which his father destined for his brow. Often has my father assured me that the ruby has faded, and become dim, upon the eve of misfortune, warning him of its approach with unerring certainty; that in the midst of gloom and peril, when his soul was sunk in despondency, it has brightened in colour to his fancy, inspiring him with fresh hopes and renewed courage. He saw, as it were, the watchful eye of his deceased father looking out from the gem, alternately cheering and warning him. It was his only hope, his only solace.

“One day, while walking along the banks of the river, musing on his fortunes, he perceived an officer of the calif advancing towards him. He was alone, and unarmed, and the stern Harthamah who drew near was his enemy, and a fit instrument for an errand of blood. The Tigris, too, rolled sullenly by, ready to cover with its waters the foul deed. He looked upon the ring—a dim mist obscured its brightness. Hope vanished, and death seemed drawing nigh. Then it was that he made that vow so well known and faithfully observed. Prostrating his forehead in the wet sands of the river’s bank, he besought the aid of the great Prophet of our faith, and vowed, that if the hand of Allah should avert the present danger, he would visit on foot the holy shrine at Mecca, and pay there the devotion of a grateful heart. He arose,

strengthened and reassured. He cast a look upon the jewel—it was bright and smiling; and he awaited with firmness the purpose of the calif.

“Harthamah approached, and rudely demanded, on the part of his master, the ring which my father so highly valued. On hearing this unjust demand his rage was unbounded, and bitterly upbraiding his brother’s tyranny, he drew the jewel from his finger. It glittered for a moment in the eyes of the expecting officer, and was then hurled far into the midst of the river. After a day of fear and anxiety my father retired to rest, but no sleep refreshed his senses. At the dead of night, he heard a voice calling upon his name. The sound, fraught with gloom and ill omened, filled his firm soul with dread. It seemed the voice of Azrael when he calls the soul away, and bids it depart from its frail, its earthly tenement. Raising himself from his couch, he snatched his cimeter which lay near, and went forth. Upon the threshold he encountered Harthamah, who fell prostrate at his feet, then rose, and led him in strange silence to the calif’s chamber. Here, having drawn aside the curtains of the royal couch, he disclosed to him the lifeless body of his brother. The hand of God had stricken Hadi with death, and the mantle of the Prophet fell upon the shoulders of my father.”

“Allah ackbar! God is great! God is good!” exclaimed the dervis and prince simultaneously.

“Go on, my child, thou hast yet more to say.”

The recital of her father’s danger and deliver-

ance had so overpowered Abassa, that for a time she was unable to proceed. In a few moments, however, she subdued her emotion, and continued.

"No sooner was my father seated on the throne, than his mind reverted to the ring. Inconsolable for its loss, he invited, with promise of great reward, divers to repair from all parts of the kingdom to seek for his lost treasure. All were foiled in their attempts; the most practised in the art had been repeatedly unsuccessful, and the calif despaired of its recovery.

"At the close of one of those days which my father was accustomed to spend with his courtiers on the banks of the river, encouraging and rewarding new attempts, an old man presented himself, and offered, with assurance of success, to dive for the jewel. Wretched poverty seemed his lot. His dress was tattered, his face and person blackened and travel soiled, and he wore the cap and belt of a miserable Giaour. My father gazed upon the infidel, smiled scornfully, and replied,

"'Thou wearest the garb of an accursed race. Can good come from a source unholy? Canst thou range the depths of these waters, and restore to me a treasure sacred and long lost?'

"'Doubt it not,' said the Giaour. 'If the swift stream has not hurried it far from hence, ere yon sun shall set the jewel shall sparkle upon thy finger.'

"'But thy limbs are feeble, old man, and the most skilful divers of the East have in vain essayed

the task. Thou canst not do this, save by magic or some accursed art, and I warn thee, at peril of thy life, beware! practise not in my presence thy foul craft.'

"'Fear not,' replied the infidel, with calmness, 'but cast this leaden circle far into the stream, as near as thou well canst upon the spot where the waters swallowed up thy treasure.'

"So saying, he placed in my father's hands a ring of lead, which the calif for a moment scrutinized, to see if magical or cabalistic characters were inscribed thereon, and then pronouncing aloud one of the attributes of Allah, he cast it into the Tigris. The stranger watched it as it fell, and then, with a mighty bound, plunged into the stream. The waters settled stilly over his head, and all awaited in breathless silence his reappearance. A few minutes elapsed, which suspense rendered doubly long to the minds of the astonished spectators.

"'Tis the work of Eblis!' exclaimed my father; 'what mortal could exist so long beneath the waves?' As he spoke, a being arose from the waters bearing the long-lost ring. His countenance was benign, his white hair fell down upon his shoulders, and the waters seemed to open a way before him as he moved along. 'Nay, smile not so incredulously. I but tell the tale my father told to me.' He wore a robe of blue silk, the ordinary habit of a dervis, yet encircling his waist was the accursed belt, that declared him a worshipper, per-

haps a spirit of the forbidden fire. Slowly and majestically he drew near to where the calif stood, while wondering at the change, all drew back as he approached. Even my father was, as he has since said, awed at his presence, and received the ring at his hands in silence.

“‘It is the same,’ he said at last, pressing it to his lips and forehead. ‘Strange being! by whatsoever power thou hast redeemed this treasure from the waters, I will not question thee. From Allah I receive it, who often performs the noblest works by wicked hands. Thou wearest the badge of an unholy creed, a sect that I abhor, whose very name I have hunted from the face of my kingdom, yet for all this the favour which thou hast conferred upon me is not lessened in mine eyes, and thy reward shall not be unworthy of it. Ask of me any gift that as prince or pontiff I can rightfully bestow, and it is thine.’

“‘Proud prince!’ was the calm reply, ‘I refuse not thy boon. At an hour when thou lookest not for me, I will be with thee and demand it. Yet ere I depart, hear this counsel, if thou wilt hear aught from the lips of a Giaour. *Beware of thy friends*, for they alone will do thee mortal hurt. From thy foes thou shalt reap honour, wealth, and power. The arm of thy father’s son has sought thy life; the voice of an enemy called thee to the throne left vacant by the death of thy treacherous brother; the hand of a hated infidel has brought to thee a treasure much valued, long despaired of. Thus

will it be ever with thee. Rejoice, stern monarch, when thou shalt hear of battles, advancing foes, and hostile banners, *here* thou shalt triumph, but heed me when I say, beware of those most dear to thee, and above all, give to no man, though thou shouldst love him better than a brother, the ring that an outcast has restored to thee.' So saying, the old man turned, and departing from the crowd, was soon lost to view.'"

When the princess had finished this recital, there was silence, and all were busied with their musings as they pondered on the strange tale. Fearful forebodings fell upon the mind of the vizier; for in the uncertain and obscure future he saw the possibility of the fulfilment of the Giaour's warning. He trembled fearfully, yet he was able to conceal his emotion, though he could not shake off those fears which the preceding recital, like the raven's croak, harsh and ill omened, had awakened in his bosom. Gloom affected also the mind of the princess, for though but half informed of her future lot, yet when she called to mind the words of the infidel, sadness darkened upon her soul and she wept. The sage seemed to be interested, in an unusual degree, in what he had heard, yet his countenance wore an expression of unruffled serenity. He was the first to break the silence.

"My children, listen not to those who prophesy of things to come, as though they were of the counsel of the Most High. Allah, and the angels to whom he opens the book of his decrees, can alone

tell us of the future. Give no heed to those who pretend to more than human knowledge. Falsehood is upon their lips, and deceit in their bosoms."

"I have learned from thee, father," replied the princess, "to distrust all tales of magic and enchantment, yet I cannot tell how the events of that day have been performed, save by some power that is not of man."

"Why dost thou think thus?" said the dervis. "The diver who seeks for pearls in the ocean might with ease explore the channelled bosom of an inland stream, and reveal to light the secrets which lie concealed within its depths. There is naught of magic in this."

"True, father," replied the princess, "but the mysterious change in the appearance of that man, his knowledge of the past, and his strange warning of the future, these, oh these, are what perplex my mind."

"Be at rest, my daughter," said the dervis. "I will ponder upon the matter, and it may be that when we meet again I can explain even these wonders to thee."

Giafar listened anxiously to the endeavours of the dervis to allay the princess's fears, but his face still remained clouded with despondency, and when the departure of Abassa left him alone with the recluse, he exclaimed, "It is in vain, father; thou canst not alter the decrees of fate. Though the soul of the Grecian Aflatoun* spoke through thy lips, still there

* Plato.

is a mystery, a horror in this story, which thy words cannot dispel. The Giaour spoke truth, and the future conceals a danger that I dread to contemplate. Why did my master place this jewel in my hands, or why, rather, did he offer to me a treasure more precious than a universe of rubies, yet rife with temptation, disobedience, and danger?"

"Forbear, my lord! Start not at the phantoms which thine own fears have conjured up. Where threatens danger but in thine own fancy? Fortune now looks upon thee smilingly; the ties with which friendship has bound thee to the calif are to be strengthened soon by one far nearer and more binding. Thy very happiness, I fear, has turned thy brain, and thou art framing sorrows from thine own imaginings, since they exist not in reality."

"Sayst thou so?" replied the prince; "then listen to me."

Giafar then related, in a few words, all the purpose and command of the calif in regard to his union with his daughter. After listening attentively to his words, the countenance of the old man drooped.

"I understand thee now," he said. "I see the source of all thy fears. In truth, thou hast much cause for them. Yet everything depends upon thy firmness, and thou art not destitute of this. Hear me, Prince Giafar; know thyself well, before it be too late. Search what of resolution and self-control is in thy bosom; look well, too, at the strong temptation that will assail thee, that will lead thee

to forfeit thine honour, and to break the faith pledged to thy master. Let not the wild passion of youth impel thee down a precipice, where happiness, life, and honour will be all engulfed. Look well at this, I beseech thee. If it were thou alone who should incur this ruin, I would adjure thee turn thy footsteps from the danger, for thy loss would pour down sorrow upon mine old head. But it is not for thee alone; those dearest to us both must suffer if thou errest, and the sun of life which with me has near gone down, must set in gloom and sorrow."

Giafar's lips quivered with emotion, and his frame heaved convulsively, as the firm earth is shaken when the elements are roused which lie pent up within its bosom.

"It is too late," he said. "I have accepted the offer of the calif; our approaching nuptials have been rumoured abroad, and now to retract would bring upon my head my master's fierce displeasure. I cannot now retrace my steps, and I am glad that it is thus. I would not alter my decision, and for worlds I would not again endure the fierce strife of passion, the throes of agony, that gave birth to a purpose so critical, so perilous. Farewell."

"Stay with me, my son," said the dervis. "Let me whisper to thee peace."

"'Tis not the time now!" exclaimed the prince. "In the whirlwind of my soul thy words would be unheard, unheeded."

"Consolation he will not regard," said the old man, gazing after him in sorrow ; "'tis lost upon him. So is the sweet sound of the lute drowned by the harsh clang of trumpets. How wonderful are Heaven's ways !" he continued, as he returned slowly to his cell. "I am like a child who has wielded the spell of some dread magician, and trembles at the lightning, and thunder, and darkness that gather and gleam around him, and the wild forms which he has conjured up unwittingly with imprudent hands."

CHAPTER XII.

Oh, passing traitor ! perjured and unjust !

SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER his interview with Abassa at the cave of the dervish, and the relation of the strange and threatening tale which he had heard from her lips, Giafar relaxed in some degree from that strict attention to the business of state, for which he had been ever remarkable. His heart was filled with the beauty of the princess ; doubts and forebodings, too, overshadowed his spirits, and rendered him alike unmindful of the present, and fearful of the

future. He could not long conceal this remissness from himself. He soon became sensible that for many days he had too exclusively devoted his time and thoughts to his own personal affairs, and conscious of his error, he roused himself from inaction, and resolved to bend with more than ordinary severity to those labours which duty to his master called upon him to fulfil. On the evening of the day upon which this purpose had been formed, and in pursuance thereof, Giafar made a secret excursion through the city. He was habited like a merchant from a far country. A wide spreading turban of foreign material and construction, a flowing robe of the wool of Astracan, with trousers and sandals equally suited to the character which he had assumed, effectually completed his disguise, and few even of his nearest friends could, in his present strange apparel, have recognised the vizier. He was accompanied by a white attendant, and by Mesrour, in the dress of an ordinary black slave. They roamed on through the wide and magnificent streets of the city, keeping close by the gardens which lay along the Tigris. Passing first through the most spacious and well-regulated portions of the capital, and finding nothing to attract their attention, they crossed the bridge which connected the opposite quarters of Bagdad. Proceeding onward down a retired street, they stopped before a mansion well lighted, from which issued sounds of merriment and festivity, somewhat restrained, indeed, yet at intervals breaking forth in a degree

louder than was consistent with concealment, if such were indeed the purpose of those within.

"Revellers!" said the prince, as, after pausing for a moment to listen, he moved onward in his walk. "I will look in upon them as I return to see that they are discreet in their mirth." They had proceeded but a few paces, when sounds of suppressed voices, and of footsteps advancing towards them, were heard. Time was scarcely allowed them to conceal themselves hastily behind a projecting wall, ere a party of four or five men hurried by them, conversing earnestly yet in whispers.

"Thou art sure then, Amrou, that he will be with us to-night?"

"He will not fail," was the reply. "Jahia Ben Abdallah is not one to sleep till all his purpose be accomplished."

"Were I not already thus deep in this matter," said a third— The rest was unheard, for by this time they had passed on. Giafar remained eagerly watching their steps, until he saw them enter the mansion which a moment before had attracted his attention, and then ejaculated in a suppressed but bitter tone, "Treason, by this hand—and from that base slave! but follow—we will enter their haunt—"

"Hold, my lord!" said Mesrour; "first suffer me to seek out a band of the city guard, or to return to the palace and arm some of thy household. Thrust not thyself, I beseech thee, into needless peril."

"There must be no delay, Mesrour," exclaimed the prince, pressing hastily onward; "every moment is precious while rebels are plotting treason within these walls. Thou mightst give the alarm, too, and thus frustrate my designs."

"If Jahia be indeed present there, he will not fail to penetrate thy disguise. Nay, my lord, I must still remonstrate against this reckless hazarding of thy life—"

"Speak not of it, Mesrour—it is forfeited already by my negligence and error. I must enter this den of traitors, I must listen to their secret counsels, discover all their hidden plans, and learn upon what foreign aid they count, that they build their hopes thus high. I will, however, render my disguise more secure. Put off thy garments," he continued, addressing the slave, "and do thou take mine."

Giafar then clothed himself in the habit of the slave, and blackened his face and arms with a mixture which he ordinarily used for that purpose, saying, when he had completed his disguise, "I can now, methinks, defy his scrutiny." He then turned to the slave, who was by this time dressed in the garb which his master had thrown off. "Go forward," he said; "we will follow as thy slaves. Enter yon mansion boldly, call thyself a merchant from Moussul; say thou art lodged without the city, and returning late hast found the gates closed against thee, and knowest not where to pass the night. Yet speak to no one who does not question

thee. Stay—thou mayst seem to be drunken with wine. They will think thy tale less strange, and be themselves less guarded. They may not heed thee ; if so, do naught which may draw attention towards thee, but conduct thyself in all things as thou seest others. Be wary, yet fearless. Now onward. Mesrour, follow thy master.”

The slave listened attentively, and when Giafar motioned him to proceed, led the way with a grave and measured step, the prince and Mesrour following at a respectful interval, as befitted the characters they had assumed. When they reached the mansion, they found the portal standing open, but on entering, the inner gate proved to be fast locked. While Giafar was meditating upon the means to gain admission, they were again surprised by the sound of approaching footsteps, and had scarce time to retire within the recess between the inner and the outer gates, when a second party entered. This band was more numerous than the former, and most of them seemed to have but recently risen from a debauch, and were still under the influence of the wine cup. On their entrance, they brushed so near the person of the prince, that discovery seemed for the moment inevitable, and Giafar's hand was upon the hilt of his cimeter. He soon, however, withdrew it, for he saw that he was still unobserved by the new comers, who passed hastily on to the inner gate, which was unlocked by a key in the possession of one of their number.

"Follow them closely—enter with them," whispered Giafar; and, obedient to his master's command, the slave pressed forward, Mesrour and the prince keeping near his person. Mingling with the party which was entering, they found their way into a courtyard, agreeably ornamented with vases of flowers and fountains. This they crossed, and ascending a flight of steps, entered a door which opened into an illuminated chamber, the light from which, shining through the latticed windows, had first arrested the attention of the prince in passing.

A carpet was spread upon the floor, around which reclined or sat cross legged about a score of revellers, as they seemed. Wine in crystal pitchers, and in gold and silver goblets, sparkled on the board; sherbets likewise, and fruits, both fresh and dried, were seen in abundance. At the upper end of the table, if thus it might be called, sat one whom Giafar recognised as having held a post of considerable importance at court, but of which he had been deprived for some fault either real or supposed. His dress was rich and well arranged. Manhood with him seemed striving against age. The former predominated in the unquenched sparkling of his eye, and in the fresh hue which showed itself high up upon his cheek, where a luxuriant growth of beard permitted it to be seen; the latter was visible in his furrowed brow, and in his beard, which was of a silvery whiteness. From the attention which he seemed to be bestowing upon those around him when Giafar entered, and from

the manner in which he received the new comers, the prince held him to be the master of the house. He gave them a warm welcome, yet hurriedly, and with small ceremony, and they seated themselves promiscuously at the board, the slave taking his place with the rest. The host then filled a goblet with wine, and placed it to his lips, all bowing to him as he drank, and wishing him health, a compliment which he returned by touching his right temple with the fingers of his right hand, inclining his head at the same time with much gravity to the company. After the rest had also drank, he exclaimed,

"Yes, friends, ye are welcome—welcome, by the beard of my grandfather! and the rather that ye bring not Jahia with you to disturb our merriment."

"We thought to find him here, my lord," replied one of the gravest of the party which had last entered. "We are here on business which nearly concerns himself, and his presence is most necessary to our council."

"True, true," rejoined Mohalleb—thus was the host called—"I spake not as altogether averse to his coming. He shall be welcome; but in time—in time.' A cup of wine or two were not amiss, ere he comes to damp our festivity with his solemn visage."

"I will reprove thee, Friend Mohalleb," said a third, the suffused state of whose countenance contradicted the formal expression into which he had

constrained his features, and suited as ill with the sentiments which he uttered—"in truth, I will reprove thee. Hast thou yet to learn that wine is an abominable thing? And therein is our law superior to the law either of Jew or Christian, and the book in which we have received it more excellent than the writings of all the prophets which have gone before, even as our Prophet, elect of God, is more excellent than they. Besides, we are here together to consult on matters of great import."

"I value not thy words," rejoined the host, "neither do I see how a draught of wine should mar prudent counsel. If we have serious and weighty duties to perform, good wine will render them the lighter to be borne, or make us rather the more willing to bear them." While he was speaking, he filled a goblet for himself, and another, which (glancing his eye at those around with a smile) he placed before his prudent counsellor, saying, "Shall accursed Giaours partake freely of Heaven's bounty, and the true Moslem alone abstain?"

"God forbid!" was the reply of the person thus addressed, as with undisturbed solemnity he forthwith raised to his lips and drained the cup, then wiping his beard with great gravity, after a deep and long-drawn respiration, he proceeded—"God forbid! I say not totally abstain, although it were well that with the common sort, the herd of men, such should be thought our doctrine. I would not have thee think me rigid in this thing; nay, thou

shalt not misconceive me, good Mohalleb, I will fill yet another cup with thee, rather than thou shouldst hold me over rigorous as touching the wine. Come—To the noble Jahia Ben Abdallah, our rightful calif.”

None refused the pledge. It was drunk deeply but in silence, as though reason had for a moment hovered round the board, and whispered to some how desperate, to all how hazardous was the cause in which they had embarked.

The silence was broken by one who had not yet spoken.

“How shall we profit by this expected change? What shall we gain should we succeed in our purpose of dethroning the present monarch, and placing in his seat the noble Jahia?”

“A calif of the stem of Ali, and a rightful descendant of our holy Prophet,” answered one, who with a few others sat apart, and had steadily refused to join in the festivity which reigned around the table.

“Yet there are many who think the house of Abbas equally worthy,” was the reply; “and, in truth, by the decision of the sword, has Allah adjudged to that race the supremacy. But I speak of gain—will our lives or our possessions be safer?”

“Ay,” interrupted the host, upon whose brain the wine began to do its office, and whose speech was becoming broken and interrupted—“ay,” he

exclaimed, "or our harems more secure, or wine freer to us than now?"

"Thinkest thou upon naught else, Mohalleb, and with a beard as white as thine? Are there not such things as honour and religion?"

"True," replied Mohalleb, laying one hand upon his bosom, and with the other stroking his beard, and raising his eyes to Heaven at the same time with drunken gravity, "true—religion—the sacred race of Ali—a cup of wine—let it be full," he continued, warmly, "a full cup to the true descendants of the Prophet, and may Allah confound the house of Abbas and all its adherents."

During this while Giafar had been anxiously watching the demeanour of the pretended merchant, upon whose address and gravity depended, in a great measure, the successful completion of his design. He was aware that the slave knew of wine only by the name, and from the frequency and earnestness with which he drank, he feared lest he might proceed to some extravagance which should betray them. More than once, under the pretext of assisting his supposed master, he took the cup from his hands and placed it upon the table, plucking him at the same time by the robe, or intimating, by some secret gesture, that he should moderate his draughts. The slave, however, was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to comprehend these mute prohibitions. He was delighted with the wine, and, despite his fears of his master's displeasure, drank often and freely, until his brain

reeled, and, forgetful of his real character and situation, he enacted the part which had been assigned him with a fidelity and truth which shut out all suspicion of its being a counterfeit. When the prince refused to fill his cup, or filled it sparingly, he held it forth to Mesrour without so much as speaking, but with an air which of itself seemed to say, "Fill full, slave," a command which, in conformity with his assumed character, Mesrour could not avoid executing.

But with the exception of some such exuberance of manner, the slave had conducted himself with considerable caution and dexterity. He had strictly followed the counsel given him by his master before they entered. He had spoken to no one; he had imitated, as well as he was able, the actions of those around him, and thus far without having drawn upon him the attention of any one present. The last pledge, however, given by the host, was of a character so disloyal and heretical, as to bewilder for a moment the already disturbed faculties of the slave. He hesitated to drink, and did not recover himself so as to place the goblet to his lips, until those around had finished their wine. This delay quickly attracted the attention of Mohalleb, who, bending his eyes upon the slave with all the steadiness which they were able to assume, awaited the conclusion of his draught. This the slave prolonged to the utmost, holding the cup raised high to his face, concealing all its features, excepting only the eyes, which, peering

from between the goblet and his overhanging turban, returned with equal gravity the gaze of the host. Finding that delay was of no avail, and that Mohalleb was not to be diverted from his scrutiny, he slowly took the cup from his lips, and disclosed the remainder of his countenance.

When Mohalleb saw a face entirely unknown to him discovered by this action, he exclaimed, in some wonder,

"Friend, how camest thou here? Who art thou?"

"I am an honest man, my lord, and a good Mussulman," said the slave.

"'Tis well spoken," was the reply, "yet in some degree indefinite. There be such things as name, country, and calling. Answer, I pray thee, as to these matters."

"My name is Ganem, or 'The Rich.' I am a merchant, and from Moussul."

"And by what chance, Ganem, didst thou find thy way hither?"

"I will tell thee, my lord," answered the slave, giving way to his intoxication, and attempting neither to resist nor conceal the inroad which wine was making upon his faculties—"I will tell thee. I lodge without the city, my lord, and this day visiting a merchant with whom I have dealings, I dined with him. We drank wine together, as you may see, in some quantity, too—we sat so long at table that night came on suddenly—very suddenly. I found the gates closed—lost my way—passed

your dwelling—saw it lighted—entered, as you must be aware—and here I am.”

“We have overlooked thee somewhat long, Friend Ganem, and thou art therefore the more entitled to our present—particular attention. Those stout blacks at thy shoulder—are they followers of thine?”

“They are,” was the consequential reply. “Slaves—mute slaves—thou needst not question them. Wonder not, my lord,” he continued, with more caution, and steadying to the utmost of his power his swimming brain, “do not wonder, I say, that a simple merchant should be thus attended.* At home I rank with the first of my calling; and I swear to you, my lord, by the prophet Elias, that there are as many slaves, mutes and eunuchs, white and black, in my abode, as there are in the palace of your vizier.”

“If thou speakest truth,” answered Mohalleb, “thou mayst aid us much in this enterprise, of which thou hast heard us somewhat too freely discourse.”

“Enterprise!” exclaimed the slave, with a vacant stare; then shaking his head, he added, “I know not of what you speak. But this I know, that you are a glorious old man, and your wine is the best I ever drank.”

“The best!” rejoined Mohalleb. “Why, the

* Mutes at this time were rarely to be met with, except in the palaces of princes.

wine is well enough—but for a man of thy wealth and rank—”

“Trifles—trifles,” interrupted the slave, now perfectly at his ease, “not worthy to be mentioned. I certify it is the best. I swear it by the prophet Elias—the best I ever tasted; and good reason, too,” he muttered to himself. “Your climate of Bagdad here gives it a flavour ours hath not. As to the enterprise you spoke of—be it what it may, I will join you, were it but to prove how much I prize and honour your unequalled hospitality.”

Mohalleb bowed low, and replied,

“I will then at large recount it to you, bearing well in mind that you are bound to us.”

“Bound?” exclaimed the slave, with an assumption of infinite dignity, “I am bound to no man. I would join with you in this matter, but it must be under no constraint. God keep you, my worthy friends. I will talk with you of this at another time.” So saying, as if to satisfy himself that there was no hinderance to his departure, rather than from any real desire to leave the company where he had been so well received, he arose from the table, and with an air of importance beckoning his slaves to follow, proceeded with irregular steps towards the door of the apartment. Perceiving, however, that some present were about to prevent his exit, he returned in time to the board, so that his change of purpose seemed entirely voluntary. “Thou hast mistaken me, my worthy host—I am

not of that sort—I will be bound to no man—always excepting my most noble master—”

“Thy master!” exclaimed many voices. “Thou art a cheat—an impostor. But now thou calledst thyself a rich merchant from Moussul.”

“And a merchant I am,” was the reply.

“And hast a master?”

“In some sort I have, friends; yes, in truth, an excellent master”—here he raised his face towards heaven with a ludicrous expression of devotion, his eyes twinkling as he spoke with wine and cunning—“a noble master, Allah above, who is the master of us all.”

“Allah kerim! God is merciful!” exclaimed many, and a dull murmur was heard around the board. Silence then followed, as though something discordant and out of tune had jarred upon the feelings of all present.

This, however, the slave did not heed, but flourishing a well-filled goblet, the contents of which he distributed in good measure upon the garments of those nearest him, and upon his own, he exclaimed,

“A generous and excellent master. A cup of wine, friends, to his welfare and prosperity!”

At this proposal, so glaringly impious as it seemed, a tumult was raised on every side.

“Away with the wretch! beat the knave into the street!” were heard resounding from all parts of the table.

Some were about to lay hands on the pretended merchant to thrust him forth from the apartment,

and, for a moment, Giafar had hopes that the craft or carelessness of the slave, for he knew not which to think it, would procure for him a safe retreat. But the voice of Mohalleb, who seemed well pleased with the convivial qualities of his guest, was heard crying loudly,

"Touch him not. It was an ill-conceived and hastily uttered jest. I would see more of him."

Still, many were clamorous for his expulsion, many for confining him in a remote apartment until morning. At this moment, while the tumult was at its height, a heavy step was heard slowly and deliberately ascending the steps without. All were in an instant hushed, and Jahia Ben Abdallah entered the apartment.

A frown of impatient anger was upon his furrowed brow, and a smile of scorn curled his lip as he advanced. He cast a glance at their irregular and disordered mirth, and then exclaimed bitterly, yet in a suppressed voice,

"Fools! meet instruments ye are for a work like mine! Is the prize already ours, that ye feast thus and shout aloud? Think ye if the calif is absent that his minion sleeps?"

Giafar's heart beat violently within his bosom as he heard these words, sending the hot blood up to his cheek and brow so forcibly, that its crimson was visible even through his dark disguise. Other signs of emotion, also, he could not for the moment control. His lips were compressed, his eyes flashed forth from beneath brows that for an in-

stant frowned, and then his countenance became cold, calm, and impassable. His hand, which had sought hurriedly the hilt of his cimeter, was as quickly withdrawn, and subduing the air of energy and dignity that was rising in his frame, he composed himself into the humble and attentive attitude which befitted his disguise.

"And why," proceeded Jahia, "when we should lurk like owls in darkness, would ye make broad day even of night?" As he said this he passed around the apartment, extinguishing one by one the lamps which hung suspended from the ceiling, lighting, ere he came to the last, a small taper, which he placed upon the carpet, about which the guests were seated.

"Thou art thyself an owl," exclaimed Mohalleb. "But let a draught of wine wash this humour from thy brain."

Jahia waved aside the proffered goblet, with an exclamation which denoted his aversion to the unhallowed draught, and replied,

"Why wilt thou, Mohalleb, thus peril our safety? We are upon the eve of success. The calif absent—the flower of the army with him—our succours from Bassora hourly expected—yet one rash act or word, nay, the very glare of yon lamps which I have just extinguished, should it meet suspicious eyes, would lead to our destruction."

"Thy wisdom oversteps itself," was the reply. "But a moment since we were a company of friends, gayly met together, and might defy the

scrutiny of prince or officer; now, shrouded in darkness, we look indeed like what we are. Light up, light up, and then to council if thou wilt."

"That thou mayst see the better to fill thy goblet?"

"Speak not thus scornfully, Jahia. This night's revel has been worth much to us—more than a score wasted in dry deliberation. It has gained us a worthy accession to our party. Look you—him yonder with the slaves. Nay, do not frown. If you like him not, he is still here," and he approached his hand to his cimeter with a significant gesture.

"Thou canst not have done this!" exclaimed Jahia, as, seizing the lamp, he passed round the table to where the supposed merchant was seated, and scanned his features with hurried, yet accurate minuteness. He then proceeded to subject the pretended slave to the same scrutiny, saying as he did so, "This passes ordinary folly. I tell thee, Mohalleb, the Vizier Giafar is abroad to-night." At this moment the lamp which he held threw its faint light upon the prince's form and features.

Jahia turned pale, stepped backward a pace or two, and then, exclaiming, "By Allah! he is here," drew his cimeter.

That of the prince gleamed in air as quickly as though lightning had left the scabbard at his side. Mesrour also drew his blade, and the slave, shaking off as he best could the fumes of the wine which he had drunk, bared his weapon and ranged himself at their side. But they were fearfully outnumbered.

A score of cimeters flashed from their sheaths, and a crowd of hostile features and strong frames arrayed themselves before them, and on either side.

"'Tis well !" exclaimed Jahia, fiercely, as he signed his followers to stay their hands, and turned the point of his own weapon towards the earth ;
" Giafar al Barmeki, thou art mine !"

" Say rather thou art mine, false slave !" rejoined the prince, with an air of immeasurable dignity, and with a confidence of tone and manner, which gave him a momentary ascendancy over his foes. Then turning to those who were confronting him, he exclaimed, " In the name of the Calif Haroun al Raschid, I here offer a free pardon to all who will throw down their arms, save only to the traitor, Jahia Ben Abdallah, and the five chiefs and authors of this conspiracy. How, Moslems ! do ye hesitate ?" he continued, as he noticed the doubt and irresolution which was visible in the faces of all round.

" 'Tis but in wonder at thy strange presumption," replied Jahia, scornfully. " Have you no answer, friends, to this lordly proffer ?" It was heard in a tumultuous acclamation, " Long live Jahia Ben Abdallah, our noble and rightful calif !"

" Thou hearest, prince," continued Jahia ; " nor is this all : at the war cry of my house a thousand cimeters would start up to execute my bidding. Thou canst not now escape me. Yet listen to my words. I hate thee, Giafar—first, for thy fidelity to a tyrant whom I abhor—next, that I have felt thy mercy—thou hast seen me grovelling at thy

feet." An expression of the bitterest enmity enwrapped his features as he thus spoke, and more than once it seemed as if, impelled by the violence of his passions, he would again precipitate himself upon the prince in combat. He controlled himself, however, and continued, "Yet, deeply as I hate thee, with tenfold bitterness do I loathe the relentless master whom thou servest. More would I give to hurl him from his throne, than to sate my vengeance with a thousand lives like thine. Aid me to do this, as with ease thou mayst, and thou shalt live—nay, more, receive my gratitude and thanks."

"Thy gratitude! thy thanks!—have I not known them? and thinkest thou that to gain these, or to lengthen out by a few days a shameless life, I would join thee in thine unhallowed purpose to dethrone the calif?"

"I look not for this—I know thee better, Giafar," was the reply. "Yet something thou canst do—something which thou shouldst deem an easy purchase of thy life."

"Speak on, I will listen, though never came aught but baseness from thy vile lips; yet quickly, a traitor's breath is poison to me."

"To-morrow at dawn of day I shall unfurl my standard in the city. 'Tis something premature, three days would bring us valuable succours, but it may not be helped. Even thy death would not now conceal our purpose—rather would it be the signal for a vigilant search throughout Bagdad, which we should be ill able to elude. Deliver,

then, this night into my hands the keys of that quarter of the palace which contains thy master's treasure, his jewels, the sacred relics of the Prophet, all indeed which may influence the minds of Musulmen in our behalf. Do this, and thou art safe. Refuse, and thou hast seen thy last sun."

"Were I willing thus to aid thee, it would avail nothing," replied the prince, affecting a hesitation which he did not feel. "Those keys are in the keeping of my father."

"Send for them, then. A single line written with importunity and as in haste, with some sure token, would place them in thy hands."

"It would—it would." He placed his hand upon his brow, and stood for a moment as though in deep meditation, and then added, "Thou dost promise for this, to spare the lives of my attendants and mine own?"

"I promise it," said Jahia.

"Wilt thou swear it?"

"I swear it," was the treacherous reply.

"Be it so, then—give me writing materials. I would yet keep my life, were it but to be revenged on thee."

A piece of parchment was then given him, with an ink horn, and a reed cut for the purpose, and Giafar wrote as follows: "From Giafar Ben Jahia ben Khaled to his beloved father. Thy son hath instant need of the keys which unlock the treasure chamber of the calif. They are, as thou well knowest, in the fourth compartment of the secret

cabinet. I have sudden and especial use for them. Neither mistake nor fail. Place them in the hands of the bearer, who will deliver to thee my signet in token that thou mayst confide in him. Thou knowest the ring. Fail not—life hangs upon the issue.”

He then gave the letter to Jahia, who examined it with care to see if there were any secret writing thereon. Satisfied of this, he returned it to the prince, who sealed it with his signet, then taking unobserved the ruby of the calif from his finger, he placed it in the hands of the slave whom Jahia had chosen for his courage and fidelity to be the bearer of the message, saying, “Show this to my father, and thy mission will not fail.”

“Should it, thy life is forfeit,” said Jahia. “’Tis now scarce the middle watch of the night. When the next hour shall have passed, if this errand be not accomplished, then thou diest. And be thou faithful and wary,” he continued to the slave, “so shalt thou meet with thy reward.” Having thus spoken, he sped the messenger upon his errand.

CHAPTER XIII.

'Tis answered—"Well ye speed, my gallant crew!
Why did I doubt their quickness of career?"

BYRON.

IN the mean while, Jahia al Barmeki was awaiting at his palace the return of Giafar from his nocturnal and, as it chanced this night, his perilous wanderings. The stay of the prince was more prolonged than ordinary, and fears for his welfare, vague and inexplicable, yet constantly recurring, found their way per force into the old man's bosom. His anxiety had reached its height, and he was about to send forth some of his household to bring him news of his son, when a knocking was heard at the door of the apartment where he was sitting. At Jahia's bidding one of his slaves entered, and informed him that "a messenger waited without who desired to speak to my lord in person."

"Send him quickly hither," exclaimed Jahia, in an unsteady voice. The slave retired, and returning presently, ushered in the bearer of the prince's letter.

It required all the old man's firmness to avoid showing unusual and unmeet agitation, as, having received it from the hands of the messenger, he

broke the seal of the missive. The hour so untimely—the slave unknown to him—there was something mysterious, too, in his silent yet bold bearing. He glanced at the superscription ; it was in the handwriting of his son, and the impress upon the seal was that of his signet. He opened the letter and perused it in silence. As he read, the face of the old man became whiter even than age had made it. “ In the name of Allah ! what means this ? ” he exclaimed. “ The keys of the calif’s treasure chamber—and at this hour ! ‘ They are, as thou well knowest,’ ” he continued, reading, “ ‘ in the fourth compartment of the secret cabinet.’ ’Tis there I keep the key of mine own private armory.” His eye here rested upon the paper with a gaze the keenest and most intense, as though he would gather some hidden, secret meaning from the lines thereon inscribed. “ ’Tis of this, then, that he has sudden need—I cannot mistake. ‘ Place them in the hands of the bearer, who will deliver to thee my signet in token that thou mayst confide in him.’ Where is this token ? ” he continued, turning to the messenger.

The slave produced the ring which Giafar had given him ; it was not the signet of the prince. Jahia knew it well, and the sight seemed to have banished all fear as well as doubt from his mind. “ ’Tis well ! ” he exclaimed, in a tone of perfect composure. “ They shall be sent him ; yet where left you the prince ? ”

“ Will my lord pardon his slave ? I should but disobey thy son’s commands to answer. It was his wish to keep his purpose secret.”

"Who were with him?"

"Friends, my lord. I can say no more than this."

"Art thou sure that friends were with him?" said Jahia, bending his eyes steadily upon the slave.

"They seemed such, my lord," was the unmoved reply.

Questioning was useless. Sensible of this, Jahia clapped his hands thrice violently together, and obedient to the signal, four slaves hastened into his presence. "Zeyn," he said, addressing one of their number, "see that my household are under arms and in waiting;" to another, "See thou that the guard of the calif's palace be collected, and hold them in readiness for my commands. Declare now," exclaimed Jahia, turning sternly to the slave before him, "declare where thou last sawest the vizier, or thou diest quickly."

"My lips are sealed even by the prince's own command," was the resolute reply.

"Thou liest, wretch!" thundered forth the old man, and then by a sign he directed the slaves to seize him. They obeyed, and having bound his arms with a silken cord which they wore at the girdle, they passed another about his neck, each grasping one extremity thereof, and then like statues awaited the further bidding of their master. "Answer now," said Jahia—"where did you leave the prince?"

The slave answered not.

"Speak! there is a moment left thee."

The slave kept a firm silence.

Though scarce a perceptible motion escaped the

old man, yet the silent sentence went forth, and in a moment the features of the victim were suffused with red, now empurpled, now darkly livid. At this instant, a convulsive motion of the lips, caused apparently by a faint attempt at speech, caught the attention of Jahia, and in hope, he motioned the executioners to intermit their dreadful office.

A few moments were afforded the slave to regain his power of utterance, and looking alternately at the grim forms which stood on either side, he faintly and slowly spoke. "Stay their hands, my lord, until thou hast heard me. The prince, thy son, is now at the mercy of his deadliest foe. Yet thou mayst save him, if thou wilt. Send but the keys of the treasure chamber by my hands to those who hold him in their power, and he is safe."

"Life and liberty shall be thine, if thou wilt lead me to him," said Jahia.

"Mine errand must be accomplished, or he dies."

"Wealth to crown all thy wishes," uttered the trembling father.

A smile was the sole reply.

"Prophet of God, look down upon him!" exclaimed the old man, summoning all his firmness; but ere he had given the fatal signal, the slave again spoke.

"Knowest thou the hour, my lord?"

"The first watch of the morning is just at hand."

A wild gleam of triumph and ferocity lighted up the features of the slave, as he exclaimed, "So soon! Old man, thine aid will come too late!"

"Away with him!" exclaimed Jahia, and in a moment the executioners had seized upon their victim, and the unhappy wretch, struggling and blackening in the throes of death, was hurried from the apartment.

"Allah in mercy preserve him! Yet it cannot be. I am a child to be thus ruffled by the malice of a slave. Hear me," continued Jahia, turning to his attendants, who had by this time returned to receive his further commands, and as he spoke, firmness and self-possession usurped in his bosom the place of trembling agitation. "Hear me—the prince, my son, is in the power of foes, and I know not where. Divide the slaves of my house and the palace guard into bands of five men, and disperse them widely throughout Bagdad. Search first the dwelling of Jahia Ben Abdallah, and the quarter of the city beyond the bridge. Speak not as ye traverse the streets, but let those who first find the vizier light their torches, and shout, 'Allah for the house of Abbas!' then enter to his aid. When that cry is heard, let all hasten thitherward; the blaze of the torches will guide you. But utter not a sound, nor fire a torch until ye shall have gained the spot where he is in person, then let their flame reach Heaven, and cry, 'Allah for the house of Abbas!'—cry loudly, as though the last trump were sounding—'Allah for the house of Abbas!'" here the old man raised his voice unconsciously into a loud and echoing shout. "Ye have heard. Away! away! Zeyn," he added, as the last of their

number was hurrying from his presence, "hold! I will go with thee and thy band—yet no—these old limbs—speed! speed!" and following hastily, Jahia left the palace.

We must now return to the abode of Mohalleb. The hour had wellnigh passed; the slave had not yet returned who bore the letter of the prince to his father, and Giafar's situation was becoming every moment more perilous. Still, hope was warm within his bosom. It was mingled, however, with a full sense of his danger. He was surrounded by fierce foes, imprisoned in a retired dwelling, far from all aid, or, at least, unable to warn his friends of his peril. His courage, however, did not desert him; of all present, he alone, the threatened victim, seemed to retain his confidence and composure. Upon the faces of the conspirators sat signs of distrust and fear. Now and then recourse was had to the wine cup, and occasionally a jest or laugh was attempted, but in vain; they seemed in discordance with the chill stillness that reigned, which, failing to dispel, they rendered the more gloomy and foreboding.

"Our message has failed," said Jahia, at last, breaking the silence. "Prince, thou hast deceived us. Thine hour is come!"

"Patience yet for a while, Jahia," replied the prince, without emotion. "The errand, as I think, will not fail."

"The time must be short, or even its success will not avail to save thee," was the answer.

Silence and expectation breathless and intense now followed. Jahia sat stern and motionless. Giafar, apparently calm, but with the most anxious interest, awaited each moment what the next might produce.

At last his fierce enemy arose, and turning, addressed his followers: "Our purpose has miscarried. Amrou, take with thee five men, and proceed carefully through the streets of the city towards the palace of the Barmecides. See if aught is stirring in that quarter, and bring us news of our messenger if thou canst. Avoid the guard—be wary and speedy. And do ye, Selim and Youssouf, go forth and arouse our friends. Let them arm as for the field. Tell them to awake if they would see the dawn." Then with a fiendish frown, and an expression of despairing malice, he exclaimed—"But these at least are our victims," and in an instant his blade clashed against that of the prince.

Blows were exchanged with the rapidity of lightning, and before the followers of Jahia could mingle in the combat, the cimeter of Giafar beating down and riving in pieces the blade of his antagonist, had descended with fearful violence upon his turban, cleaving it in twain, and inflicting a deep and stunning wound upon his bare brow. Ere he could repeat the blow, numbers interposed to the rescue of their chief, and Giafar and his followers beheld themselves hemmed in by a dense circle of fierce and skilful foes. Yet bravely was the contest maintained. Scarce a moment had

passed ere Mesrour had cut down two who pressed upon him closest, and the slave, though bleeding from various wounds, held his opponents manfully at bay.

The prince's uncommon strength, and his unequalled dexterity in the use of his weapon, had kept him as yet unharmed, notwithstanding he was the chief object of attack. All shrank back from the deadly sweep of his cimeter, as though fate descended upon its edge, and for a time it seemed as if with the might of his single arm he could extricate himself from the dangers which were gathered around him. But they crowded in fast and thick, and though a flood of gore, though many fallen, both wounded and dead, bore terrible evidence to the work which his hand had wrought, his enemies were still unwavering. If, at times, they retired from his arm, it was only to return to the attack with violence increased and numbers undiminished.

Mesrour had now fallen, struck down by the hand of Mohalleb, and the slave, though he drew closer to his master, bestriding the fallen eunuch, and maintaining an unbroken front to their antagonists, was evidently scarce able to wield his cimeter. Giafar's only hope was succour, his sole thought but to prolong the contest. He now put forth his strength more sparingly, content to repel the assaults of his foes, without striving to deal back the blows which were aimed at him from every side. At times, it is true, when he found

the traitor Jahia within his reach, he could not refrain, he could not withhold his arm from assailing him, but in vain; the stroke fell upon the body of some faithful follower, who averted and received the death intended for his master. But his enemies now surround him, save that he has placed his back against the wainscoting of the apartment, for the slave has just fallen at his feet. He is deeply wounded—his strength fails—he still resists, but 'tis vain! the combat is hopeless. Hark—a sound—'twas the sighing of the wind, or the distant watch of the city—no—'tis the tramp of feet, remote, yet fast approaching. His enemies heed it not, they are too eager for their prey.

“Thou art mine!” shouted the fierce Jahia.

“Son of the tomb, thou liest!” responded Giafar, as fiercely and triumphantly, for the sound of footsteps was now distinctly heard advancing. Despair's cold hand is withdrawn. Hope nerves him. He waves his arm with a strength somewhat like his own. The light gleaming steel flashes around the hostile circle that environs him—that circle is broken—it is swept down—no, two have fallen—one, a headless trunk—the other cloven to the waist by that resistless blow; the rest have borne back from its might. The trampling is nearer—it is here—it is just without. The door opens. “Ye have come in time!” shouted the prince, in thrilling and widely spreading accents. They enter. Allah in heaven! 'tis Amrou with his men!

But they enter confusedly, and in disarray, and

there is blood upon the garments of the foremost. The shout of derisive triumph which comes from his foes is answered and drowned by an echoing cry without—"Allah for the house of Abbas!" Torches throw their blaze through the latticed windows—that cry is again sounded, and following close upon Amrou and his retreating band, four of the trustiest of his household enter impetuously, and bearing back all resistance, range themselves at the prince's side.

"'Tis bravely done, and in time," he exclaimed, in tones of exulting approbation. "I was sure—" and the combat was furiously restored. Still they are too few. The foe again closes upon them. That little band receives them with unblenching firmness; their cimeters are drenched with the blood of their enemies, and their own is dripping from those hostile blades. They stand like a rock—but as amid a tempest of ceaseless and fiercely coming waves. The inequality in numbers, however, now fast diminishes, for each moment the shouting of those without is heard anew, the torches burn higher and brighter, and fresh slaves, singly, and in bands, rush in to the rescue of their master. The rebels fight with the resolution of despair, but they are unable to withstand the daring and indignant courage of their opponents, and in their turn are beaten backward.

"Jahia," said Mohalleb, who had this night shown himself an approved soldier, scarce intermitting, as he spoke, the deadly work in which he was engaged, "our men give way. Withdraw yourself

from the fight. The hour is come. Thou must sleep this night in a monarch's palace or in thy tomb. Withdraw, and array our friends in the streets. Thou wilt do well likewise to clothe thyself in armour," he continued, more careful of the safety of his chief than of his own. "Away! when all is in readiness raise the war cry of thy house—at that signal I will join thee without."

"Canst thou hold thyself here yet for a while?"

"Fear me not. I will not move from the spot which my feet now cover, save to go forward, until thou shalt give the word."

"Be it so," was the reply; and Jahia, extricating himself from the fray, disappeared by an inner door from the chamber. Mohalleb could not, however, make good his boast. Scarce had Jahia left the apartment, when the arm of Giafar clove him to the earth. Seeing him fall, his followers, after a short and wavering resistance, fled on all sides; some by the numerous doors which opened into various portions of the building, others leaping from the low windows into the court, whence they found their way into the street.

"Follow the rebels," exclaimed the prince; "yet not too far," and as his men vanished in the pursuit, he sank down upon the divan, breathing heavily and exhausted; overcome in part with fatigue, and in part by the violence of his emotions.

"In the name of Allah, what means this tumult?" exclaimed his father, who at that moment burst into the apartment, and rushed forward to the prince. "Art thou alive, my son?"

"Alive and unhurt, my father," answered Giafar, raising his head, but again burying it in the old man's bosom, as he drooped thereon, embracing him, "though hard pressed by the slaves. Thou didst not fail," he continued, again lifting up his face and smiling, though with an expression of deep emotion—"I should have known it—I was a fool to fear."

"But thou art faint and wounded—this blood—"

"It is not mine," replied the prince. "A slight hurt," he added, as he wiped away the red blood, yet still felt it oozing forth from a deep wound in his neck, "'tis nothing. Mesrour has fared worse; yonder he lies, sore wounded, yet alive. Let him be seen to without delay. A cup of sherbet. I am wearied with keeping the knaves at bay," and again he sank back upon the divan, half supporting himself against the bosom of his father. It was brought him. He drained it at a draught, and exclaimed to the attendant into whose hands he placed the empty goblet, "Speed thou to the palace and lead down the soldiery."

"They are here already, my lord."

"Bring hither, then, my horse. Quickly! away!"

"But thou hast not told me," exclaimed his father, "what means this peril. Whence comes it?"

"Treason is on foot, and this night shakes its standard over the city. Jahia Ben Abdallah and his followers are in arms. But 'tis no time for

words. Within the hour they will be battling with us like fiends in his behalf. Question me not, my father, but descend thou into the street, and keep our men back from the pursuit. Let them move slowly onward. We know not yet the number of our foes. Nay, do not heed me. In a moment I shall be with you."

Reposing for an instant after their departure, Giafar quaffed again a goblet of sherbet, and having hastily stanchèd the blood which still flowed from his wound, he proceeded into the street. When there, he found the guard of the palace mounted and drawn up in order, and a portion of the calif's household and his own on foot. Placing himself at the head of the latter, and commanding the horsemen to follow in close array, he hastened onward. The noise of the strife was heard in the distant streets, and seemed approaching. Pressing forward with as much rapidity as was consistent with the regularity of their march, they soon met with parties of their own men retreating; farther on, some were still engaged, as it seemed, in a most unequal contest, and hurrying to their aid, they found themselves in front of a numerous and well-ordered band of foes.

The encounter was fierce and desperate. Many fell on both sides, swept down by the edge of cimeter, wounded with steel-headed jerrid, or pierced through with long lances. Yet their places were as fast supplied, and the fray continued unabated. The number of the rebels was every moment in-

creasing. Jahia appeared not among the combatants, but was actively engaged in summoning his followers. As they assembled, he arrayed them in small bands, and placing them under the command of some trusty officer, despatched them into the fight. Neither side gave way. A surprising courage and resolution seemed to animate both parties, and for a long time the issue appeared uncertain. Giafar, though he mingled occasionally in the battle, watched its tide with the eye of a chief, and at the moment when it raged the fiercest, ordered a body of horsemen to fetch a circuit around an adjacent street, and assail their enemies unexpectedly from behind. This first caused them to waver. The prince perceived their confusion; he heard the shout of the horsemen as they made the onset, and at the same moment leading on his followers, they attacked their opponents with irresistible fury. The rebels were shaken; they rallied; they again gave way, and the tumult in their rear increasing their fears and disorder, they were borne backward, yielding at first reluctantly, step by step, until at last they were driven rapidly down the streets of the city.

"My horse!" exclaimed the prince, as he saw a slave approaching with his favourite steed—"my horse! these dogs are swift of foot." Then mounting, he ordered the footmen to divide their ranks, thus opening a passage, through which, heading the guard of the palace, he assailed at full speed the retreating enemy.

Naught can describe the tumult which ensued. The darkness and the gleaming of torches, the trampling of horse, the clash of cimeters as they rang against each other, the groans of those who fell wounded and trodden down in the press, the cries of each party as they invoked the aid of Allah—a scene like this memory alone can recall, and the imagination picture. None asked for mercy, none granted it. Passions darker than the night, and wilder than its strife, were careering over the battle; citizens were foes, and brothers encountering fiends. Mingled together in a confused tide, friends and foemen, hoarsely shouting, grappling in deadly strife, falling and pressing onward, pursuers and pursued, died all in blood, swept down the streets towards the gates of the city.

Here the rebels held themselves for a while, and the battle was waged fiercely anew. In front of his men, mounted on a steed of perfect blackness, and arrayed in a slave's disguise, the prince carried havoc wherever he turned his blade. He seemed an avenging spirit, or some fiend of darkness, scattering death abroad with a familiar hand; none dared encounter him, but as he spurred forward, all gave way before him. Many a torch was held aloft by his followers, that they might discover the fortune or the bearing of their leader. At times the glare would reveal him bounding amid the foe, and bearing back the throng as he waved his cimeter streaming with red blood, in the unequal light thus thrown upon him—at times,

bending forward upon his saddle, his foot, incased in its sandal, resting far backward upon the broad stirrup, while his steed seemed to leap into the air, and stooping his turbaned head even below the mane of the charger which so nobly bore him, as he dealt a blow against a foe. Rarely did it fail of a victim; and each time that an enemy fell beneath his arm, Giafar's voice was heard exclaiming, "Allah ackbar! God is victorious!" Often was that thrilling cry echoed on the night air, and as often his followers knew that a rebel had bit the dust. The contest at the gates was sharp, yet soon decided. A furious charge upon the foe, bravely repelled, an onset renewed, a moment of bloody strife, then a wavering, a yielding, and the current poured forth from the city, and spread itself over the plain. Here the rebels made a last and desperate stand.

In the tumultuous conflict within the city, Jahia and the prince had not encountered, though each sought eagerly to match himself with the other, jealous lest the fortune of the fight should rob him of that vengeance which each thought peculiarly his due. They now met. Giafar found his enemy near the bank of the river upon the right, where, by every act of valour, he was stimulating his followers to a last strenuous effort to retrieve the day. They assaulted each other with singular ferocity, and the combatants on either side that were near them paused to witness the contest. Both parties seemed content that the issue should

depend upon the personal valour of their chiefs—the followers of Giafar, from a confidence in the prince's prowess, and their enemies, from a hope that their desperate fortune might even yet be repaired by the courage and skill of their leader.

There was nothing, in truth, in the condition or conduct of either, from which any presage might be drawn as to the result of their strife. They were equally matched. Both were practised warriors, both were animated by the most deadly hostility, and ventured their lives as though they held them but for the brief service of that eventful night. Both, too, had been wounded; and if the prince was superior in dexterity and strength, these advantages were well counterbalanced by the complete armour in which his adversary was clothed. After a brief struggle, in which each engaged with more impetuosity and daring than suited with prudence, both, as if by mutual consent, paused for a moment and rested upon their weapons, as though summoning all their energy and coolness ere they resumed the combat. The river rolled near them, into which, as the torches flickered in the wind, and the faint starlight alone was visible, their eager efforts had more than once wellnigh precipitated them, and they drew off from its margin farther up upon the plain.

"Thou wilt not now escape me," was Giafar's exclamation, as they again addressed themselves to the encounter. "Thine armed slaves cannot now protect thee."

"I need them not," was the angry reply ; and thus saying, Jahia fiercely assailed the prince. Spurring their horses forward against each other, they closed in a more guarded yet deadly strife. Their strokes fell like rain, as fast and weighty as though giant hands had wielded the weapons which inflicted them. Their cimeters clashed together with a force which would have riven them in pieces, except for the surpassing excellence of their temper, and have drunk deeply and repeatedly of blood, save for the unequalled dexterity with which they were parried. They passed and repassed each other at full speed, showering blows in their career, wheeling and returning with the rapidity of lightning, each warding off or eluding the attacks of his adversary with great skill, yet at times so narrowly as to cause their respective followers to tremble for the safety of their chiefs. After a short time, the light soil beneath their horses' feet became disturbed to and fro by their trampling, and rising into the air enveloped them in a cloud of dust, entirely concealing them from the eyes of the beholders. Still the sword strokes rang sharply, and the voices of the combatants were heard in various exclamations of hatred, defiance, and exultation. The suspense of all around had risen to its height, when presently a sound was heard like the swift shock of steeds together, followed by a fall which shook the earth beneath their feet, and at the same time Giafar's voice, exclaiming, "Allah ackbar ! God is victorious !" was heard

in clear and triumphant accents from within that veil of sand. The wind then wafting aside the dust, disclosed the person of the prince standing over his prostrate enemy.¹⁰ The followers of Jahia, uttering a shout of grief and revenge, rushed forward to rescue the body, or haply the life of their chief, but they were met by eager and exulting opponents, and after a short struggle driven far across the plain.

Jahia lay prone upon the earth. Horse and rider had been borne down in the encounter. He endeavoured feebly to raise his head from the dust, bleeding, and gasping wildly for breath. He in part succeeded, and had strength left to utter, in an altered tone, "Thou hast conquered—thy hand—but turn my face—" and he pointed towards Mecca. Giafar complied with his request, and paused to watch him for a moment as he attempted to mutter his devotions. 'Twas vain. The blood, which a moment before streamed freely from a ghastly wound upon his throat, was staid as he sat erect, and flowing inward mingled with his breath. Still, for an instant, he supported himself, strongly convulsed, yet striving with his agony; then his limbs became suddenly relaxed, and he fell back lifeless upon the sand. Giafar cast a glance upon the changing, stiffening features of his adversary, as he lay prostrate before him, then, mounting his horse, spurred hastily across the plain. The fight was becoming every moment more remote. The rebels were flying and falling

beneath the blows of their victorious enemies—enemies who had no touch of mercy, or thought of sparing the foes of their calif and their God. Far over the plain the form of the prince might still at intervals be seen, dealing death upon the flying, and when darkness and the tumult hid him from sight, his voice sounding above the distant din in that terrific exclamation, “Allah ackbar !” told the work in which he was yet engaged. Morning saw that conspiracy broken and scattered, and ere the sun set upon Bagdad, naught remained to point out the danger and the strife which had passed away, save the lifeless bodies strewn over the desert, and the heads of Jahia and his chief officers frowning in death upon the walls of the city.

CHAPTER XIV.

He comes, from battle and from war,
He comes, victorious from afar.

MONTHS passed away, and tidings of victory came often from the absent monarch. Defeated in battle, the emperor had recourse to the snare of a deceitful truce, and after the retreat of the victorious calif, swept without opposition the fields which had been so hardly contested. The news of this outrage reached the ears of the calif as he was

conducting homeward his wearied warriors down the banks of the Euphrates. Burning with rage, he recrossed the mountains of Asia Minor amid the snows of winter, and carried desolation even to the walls of Constantinople. Nicephorus yielded to the storm, and a disgraceful tribute marked his submission.

Meanwhile the prince was occupied with the domestic cares of the kingdom. His vigorous and skilful administration was felt in the most distant portions of the state, remedying disorders that seemed too remote and minute for a supervision less watchful than his own. The capital, however, fell more immediately under his observation ; and the order and industry of its inhabitants testified the respect which they paid to his authority, and the security with which they reposed under its protection. Often did he wander through the city by night, to detect those crimes which else might have escaped his notice ; disguised, he suffered the insolence, while he discovered the debauchery of the licentious ; and the boldest in guilt trembled at the name and presence of the vizier Giafar. Assiduous attention to these duties, whiled the time away ; yet many solitary hours did he pass, pondering upon the charms of his mistress. He had not seen her since their interview at the cave of the dervis ; yet the remembrance of that hour almost sufficed to render him happy. He knew now that he was beloved ; and to know this was everything to the enamoured prince. Careless of

his future fate, he thought only of the present, and anxiously awaited the return of his victorious master. * * * * *

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Spring comes like a queen, with her armies of flowers, "brandishing the weapons of their pointed leaves." Winter, the tyrant, flies, for the nightingale proclaims her sovereign's approach, and the dove and linnet are chanting her praises in the groves. The calif has returned. He enters Bagdad, as he oft had entered it before, in triumph, and his rejoicing subjects flock to welcome their victorious lord. He had returned after a long but fortunate campaign. The terror of his arms had been diffused throughout the remote West; the Roman empire trembled at his name; and an embassy from Charlemagne testified the esteem of his great rival, flattering his pride, if it added not to the stability of his kingdom.

Thus prosperous, both at home and abroad, the monarch now turned his thoughts to an object that interested him far more than all others. This was the marriage of the vizier Giafar to his daughter Abassa. His subjects are eagerly awaiting the nuptials; naught is heard throughout the kingdom but the praises of the prince, worthy alone, they say, to receive the hand of the "Rose of Persia." Friends warmly congratulate him upon his approaching marriage, and esteem him the happiest of the happy. The venerable Jahia alone seemed not to participate in the general joy. The family of the Barmecides was already the most illustrious

in the kingdom, and this was distinction sufficiently honourable, in a land where hereditary nobility was unknown, and where rank depended upon offices of trust, which were granted by the favour or justice of the monarch. But the boundary which separated them from the throne was now to be passed. His family was about to be allied to the sacred race of Abbas, and in the veins of his son's sons would flow the same blood which had once warmed the bosom of the uncle of the Prophet. The old man foresaw the evils which might arise, and at no distant day, from the dazzling, though dangerous alliance, and he trembled as he thought upon them. He knew not, however, the stern precaution which the calif had adopted to prevent those dangers which he feared; and had he known of this, instead of diminishing his anxieties it would only have increased them, and in a tenfold degree. Concealing his useless uneasiness, the old man, though inwardly sorrowing, looked calmly upon the preparations for the intended nuptials.

The prince has resigned his office into the hands of his master, that the toils of public life may not divide those hours which are destined by the calif to social and unfettered enjoyment. The post of vizier has been conferred upon Fadhel, Giafar's elder brother. The contract of marriage has been signed and sealed—the imam has recited the customary formula—the legal ceremonies have been performed, and all things are ready for the reception of the princess at the abode of the expecting Giafar.

CHAPTER XV.

His floating robe around him folding,
Slow sweeps he through the columned aisle,
With dread beheld, with gloom beholding,
The rites that sanctify the pile.

Giaour.

Joy and festivity reign throughout the city. For three days sumptuous cavalcades and magnificent processions are passing to and fro, throughout the streets, bearing the customary presents from the father of the bride, to the abode of the favoured bridegroom. Gay robes, rich furniture, bright vases of gold and silver, with jewels of high worth, blaze in succession on the way. The rarest treasures of Asia mingle with the more useful but less costly productions of the West. "The hand of Liberality fills the lap of desire," and all eyes are wondering at the calif's bounty.

Bright lights gleam at night from mosque and college, and from every terrace burning lamps are sending to heaven their perfume. The nights vie with the days in splendour. The Tigris rolls its waters through a plain of light; for on either side, palace and bazaar, and the various dwellings which skirt the stream, are pouring from their windows a blaze as of noonday. The bridge of boats which

crosses the river is illuminated, and the tapers reflected in its waters mingle with the planets which hold their course through the mimic heaven beneath. Burning torches sail eddying and whirling down the stream like stars that have fallen, and float unextinguished upon its surface. "The carpet of gayety is spread." The chanting of merry voices, the sound of lute and tabour fall upon the ear. Joy is heard in the light step of him that passes, and in the breeze that murmurs gladly by.

On the fourth day, the bride is carried in a litter to the palace of the prince, escorted by a numerous band of maidens. The calif and Giafar follow, reining noble steeds, and after them throng a numerous retinue of friends and dependants.

A long canopy of silk extends from the royal palace to the abode of the prince, under which the procession passes, shielded from the burning sun. Amid loud outbursting music, they enter the prince's dwelling, and throng through its spacious chambers. The apartment into which were ushered the most important personages of the assemblage, and into which all crowded that could gain admission, was a vast hall, supported by ranging pillars, where cascades and fountains were mingling their sounds with the music of the cymbal and tabour.

The hours pass gayly to the joyous guests. The sun is gone, and his absence is supplied by a thousand lamps that hang suspended from the carved ceilings and brightly painted walls. Blazing jewels, too, that sparkle upon the richly habited throng

like stars, throw their bright rays upon the splendid scene. The jest, the song, the dance, make up the round of pleasure, and all seem happy. The delighted Giafar smiles, and the calif is the gayest of the gay.

The princess enters often the apartment, at each time changing anew her rich robes for garments yet more splendid. But wealth and art are exhausted, and she at last appears, covered with a veil of crimson silk bordered with jewels and with gold. Ere he bends with her before the calif, the bridegroom is clothed with a costly habit studded with gems, the gift of the Commander of the Faithful. They approach together to the monarch's feet. His liberal hand has showered pearls upon the head of his bending daughter, and his lips are about to unclothe to pronounce a blessing on his children, when—

“Hold! forbear!” exclaimed a stern voice, and all eyes were directed to a dark form which at that moment glided ghostlike into the apartment. He wore the garments of a fire worshipper. Instead of turban, the cap of a Giaour covered his head, and his soiled and hoary beard descended to the leathern belt which encircled his waist. Muttered curses were heard throughout the hall, while astonishment and indignation were visible in the face of every guest as they descried these emblems of the outcast. All made way for him as he approached, gathering up their garments, and shrinking from the touch of the defiled infidel, and he

advanced through the throng close to the side of the calif.

So deeply was the calif interested in the bridal ceremonies, that he was unaware of the Giaour's approach until he had advanced close to his side. No sooner had he cast his eyes upon the strange intruder than he started ; then composing his countenance gazed upon him in silence. In an instant, an interval of years was removed, and things long past were present to his remembrance ; for in the person of the dark infidel who stood before him he knew the form and features of that mysterious being who had rescued his father's legacy from the waters of the Tigris. Mastering the awe that was creeping upon him, he said, firmly, "Is it thou, strange being ?—wherefore art thou here ?"

"In an hour when thou lookest not for me, I have come," was the reply.

"Thou sayst rightly," answered the monarch, firmly. "I looked not to see thee at such a time. What wouldst thou with me ?"

"Canst thou not surmise mine errand ?" replied the Giaour. "Have the years which have rolled by since we last met, effaced from thy memory the events of that day ?"

"As though they were of yesterday, I remember them," said the calif.

"On that day I brought from the deep the jewel that now adorns thy—nay, 'tis not there, thou wearest it not ! Thou hast not parted with it !" exclaimed the aged infidel, in a thrilling tone. "Yet

—no, no! thou couldst not thus despise my warning!”

“Question me not, old man,” said Haroun, with as much firmness as he could assume, “but proceed as to the purpose of thy coming.”

“Thy promise—the boon which thou art pledged to grant me—thou canst not have forgotten it.”

“I remember well. In requital for thy service on that day, I passed my royal word to grant thee any boon thou mightst demand, so that it injured not the honour and safety of our holy faith, and the well-being of our subjects. Well, go on!”

“For that purpose have I now come—to claim the fulfilment of thy promise.”

“This is no place, old man. At another hour, and it shall be thine—but the time is ill fitting. Dost thou not mark how thy presence casts a gloom on all around?”

“If the gloom of to-day dispel the darkness of to-morrow the time is *well* fitting,” replied the stranger. Then casting his eyes slowly around upon the assemblage, he added, “But thou sayst aright; fear sits in the face of every guest, yet who seems more sad than yon bridegroom, who now clasps the hand of that maiden, her of the cypress form. There is mystery here—how should this be?”

Anger predominated over awe for a moment in the calif’s bosom, and he replied quickly, “Thou art over bold. Once more, I bid thee question me not.”

"As I live !" interrupted the Giaour, "that ring ! it is the same ! 'Tis shining on the prince's finger. Rash monarch ! what hast thou done ? Thou hast slighted my warning, thou hast scorned my counsel. What shall hinder that sorrow and ruin come not upon thee, and upon thy race ?"

"It is written !" said the monarch, gloomily, impressed, despite his efforts, by the earnest manner in which the Giaour addressed him.

"Naught is written but thine own folly and presumption ; the evils which should follow may yet be averted, if thou wilt listen to me ; if thou refuse not the boon that thou hast already promised to bestow."

"Speak on then, but quickly," said the calif.

"My words are for thine ear alone," replied the infidel.

At a sign from the Commander of the Faithful all drew back dismayed, and wondering at the emotion evinced by the calif at the words of that old man. The stranger then approached more closely to the monarch's side, and said, in a low voice,

"Seek not, imperious prince, to oppose the laws by which the God thou worshipping rules his servants. Thou hast joined thy children in marriage, but thou hast fettered their union by a grievous chain. Remove it—render them free and happy. So shalt thou avoid the danger which now threatens thee, and avert such sorrow as will one day overwhelm thy soul with its bitterness."

It was with the utmost difficulty that the calif could restrain his anger sufficiently to await the conclusion of the stranger's words. He did so, however; but fire flashed from his eyes, and his bearded lip quivered with agitation; and when the old man had finished speaking, he exclaimed quickly, and aloud,

"Accursed dog! who has counselled thee to this? There is treason in thy words, and, by my right hand! the traitor shall suffer."

As he spoke, his eyes glanced around the assemblage until they rested on Giafar. But the prince was too much occupied in his own emotions to be moved by, or even to heed the scrutinizing glance of his master. The strange tale which he had so lately heard, had not yet passed from his remembrance. He could not doubt that the infidel before him was the same mysterious stranger, whose warning to the calif had impressed his bosom with such fear. Amazement and awe were strongly depicted in his countenance, as he gazed upon the scene before him, and listened to the fearful forebodings of his heart. Thus absorbed, he endured the gaze of the calif with unruffled composure. Haroun, half divested of his suspicions, hesitated, seemed irresolute, then turned again to the stranger, whose attitude exhibited a calmness, which was the more striking contrasted with the agitation that affected all present.

"Who art thou?" he said.

The Giaour spoke not.

“Whence hast thou thy knowledge?”

The stranger pointed upward, and a solemn and fearful smile lightened up his dark features, but he spoke not a word.

“Say rather from thine own dark abode. No good angel would wear that garb. Thou mayst be Eblis’s self—against whom we implore thine aid, most merciful Allah!”

Talismans were sought and clasped by trembling hands. Prayers were uttered. Many called aloud upon the most merciful, self-subsisting, all-wise Allah, or by whatever attribute they chose to invoke the protection of the Divinity. Female voices were also heard, mingling their sweet but tremulous intonations in the adjurations and prayers that were uttered around them. Many of careless and dissolute lives were seen gathering around some good imam, whose presence they would have carefully avoided at a season of mirth; and even in that hour of terror the saint could not repress his pride, as he bade them grasp the skirts of his garments, and remain fast by his holy person.

“If thou art that dark spirit,” continued the calif, when he had somewhat repressed his fears—“if thou art that dark spirit, leave me—tempt me no more. That thou art an enemy to our holy faith I know full well, from the boon which thou hast proffered. Yet, infidel or fiend, whiche’er thou art, thou shalt fail of thine unhallowed purpose. The evils which might accrue to Islamism, from a

race too nearly allied to my house, could alone be averted by the restraint which, as the guardian of our faith, I have laid upon the union of my children. I wonder not it should displease thee. Thou wouldst scatter the seeds of strife in the bosom of religion, ay, within the walls of paradise, if thou couldst. But be gone!" Here the calif's voice echoed in thrilling tones throughout that spacious hall. "I heed thee not. Though a legion of fiends should oppose me, I will not alter my determination. I will have no offspring of Giafar al Barmeki and my daughter strive, when I am dead, to wrest the sceptre from the grasp of my sons."

All heard and wondered at this announcement. Giafar was pale as marble, and the princess trembled, and leaned upon his arm for support.

"Is thine honour of no worth, then? Is thy plighted faith naught?" exclaimed the Giaour. "Thou hast promised to grant my prayer, and yet I ask in vain."

"If thou art mortal, demand some other boon. Ask for lands, rich jewels, steeds, wealth illimitable, and they shall be thine; but this comes not within the bounds of my promise."

"For myself I wish nothing. The treasures of this world cannot enrich one who has no part in its cares. I plead but for others; and, mark me well! the day is coming when thou wouldst part with half thy kingdom, if thou couldst recall this hour."

The calif sternly shook his head.

"Be not blind to their fate," continued the Giaour. "Upon the face of yon bridegroom sit youth and manhood, and that rich veil, if I guess aright, conceals a fair form, and a bosom swelling with love and hope. Need I say more? Canst thou, by a word, extinguish the flame of affection, and chill the warm blood that courses through their veins? Be wise in time. Wilt thou not bitterly repent, when thy commands shall be disobeyed? Wilt thou not forgive? The punishment will not be—"

"It shall be death," interrupted the calif, in the most fearful tones. Then turning to the prince, he said, "Hearest thou, Giafar?"

The prince bowed his head, and placed his hand upon his bosom, in token of his devotion to his master's will. As for the princess, she trembled more violently, and would have fallen, had not Giafar's arm supported her.

"And now, strange man, away!" exclaimed the monarch. "Thou talkest in vain. I will not listen to thee. Away! keep us no longer from the holy rites."

Haroun waved his hand impatiently, and turned to complete the yet unfinished ceremonies. When he again looked, the infidel was gone. The spell which the presence of the Giaour seemed to have cast upon the monarch, vanished when the infidel was no longer present. Suspicion and anger were in an instant awake.

"'Tis knavery! 'tis a cheat!" he exclaimed. "Which way went he? Saw none of you his departure?"

The astonished guests pointed in various directions, in which, as it appeared to their troubled fancies, the Giaour had left the hall.

"Seek him, Mesrour—seek him all. Search the building from court to terrace—scour the garden—drag him to my presence. I would again question the slave. Away—quickly!"

All the recesses of palace and garden are hastily searched, but without success. They return one by one, and to the calif's question, "Have you found him?" all have the same reply. Mesrour, indeed, brought word that, in crossing one of the walks of the court, he passed a holy man, who was performing his ablutions before a fountain. Save him, no person had been found within the walls.

"A dervis!" said the calif, quickly, when Mesrour had spoken. "Didst thou scan him closely? Were there no tokens of the Giaour upon him?"

"There were none, may it please the Commander of the Faithful. He wore a white turban, and was robed in the blue habit of a scheick."

"Art thou sure?" said the calif. "Have not thine eyes deceived thee? Eblis has power to-night. Why didst thou not question him?"

"May it please the calif," replied Mesrour, "I feared to interrupt the saint's devotions. But there could be no deceit. A rosary" was in his hands, and on returning, I heard him, as he passed the

reads through his fingers, call aloud upon the cred names and attributes of the Most High."

"'Tis well, let it pass," said Haroun, relapsing to thought. Giafar and the princess, trembling and agitated, now kneel again at his feet, and roused from his revery, the calif coldly pronounces a blessing upon their heads. The ill-omened nuptials are over.

The princess, having bent lowly before her stern father, retired, accompanied by her damsels. After her departure all crowd around the prince, with kind greetings, and warm wishes for his happiness; but they are coldly uttered, and sound like mockery to his ear. His father and brothers look sadly upon him, and, as they clasp him in their arms, bid him be of good cheer. Giafar receives them with vacant gaze—he heeds them not—his thoughts are at times fixed upon the trying present, and at times upon the threatening future.

"I have seen to-night," he whispered to himself, "another link in the chain that is dragging me to my ruin!"

Yet, however absorbing were his fears, they vanished from his mind, and gave way to emotions far more poignant, as he retired from the nuptial chamber, and sought alone his solitary apartment. Mockery again greets him as he crosses the threshold of his own chamber; for there, as though their mistress were reposing within, the maidens of the bride are grouped together, as is the custom, and affect to oppose his entrance. Their feigned resist-

ance is but short: the temper of Giafar can ill brook such foolery, and he dashes rudely by them into the apartment. We will not tarry by the couch of the sad bridegroom. May he slumber, if his thoughts will let him. Sleep, deep and undisturbed, such as visits not the eyes of mortals, save by the aid of poppy juice, or black Thebaic tincture, should steep his senses in oblivion. He will not else forget his cares.

The calif has retired, gloomy and disturbed. Each wondering guest has departed to his own home, and the hall is deserted. The lamps, which shone so brightly, are extinguished by the slaves of the palace, and darkness covers all things. But now the moon appears with her pale light, ascending slowly above the horizon. Arise, chaste Diana, shine coldly out in the heavens—triumph if thou wilt: Hymen has deserted the sweet queen of love, and for once follows captive in thy train.

CHAPTER XVI.

How welcome is each gentle air
That wakes and wafts the odours there !
For there—the rose o'er crag and vale,
Sultana of the nightingale,
The maid for whom his melody,
His thousand songs are heard on high,
Blossoms blushing to her lover's tale.

Giaour.

AFTER the marriage of Giafar to his daughter, the calif's affection for the prince seemed to have vanished, and in its stead fear and suspicion had entered his bosom : suspicion, that the appearance of the stranger, who had borne so eventful a part in the occurrences of the nuptial evening, had been caused by Giafar himself, in hopes that by working upon the fears of his master, he might be induced to retract his purpose with regard to the union of his children ; fear, lest an alliance, commenced under circumstances so inauspicious, might terminate in disobedience and punishment. Anger also moved him, when he remembered that in the confusion of his soul, he had then revealed the harsh constraint which he had thrown upon the affections of his children, thus rendering their present lot and their future fortunes subjects for raillery and scoffing in

the mouths of a busy world. He had wished the prince to enjoy, in the estimation of his subjects, all the honour and happiness which should of right belong to an alliance so exalted and so envied, while in reality he would bind him, by the most stern threatenings, to err in nowise from the commands which he had imposed upon him. Yet, in each wish he feared disappointment. His own haste and imprudence had already foiled the one, and the other, and more important, was threatened by the darkest omens. All his fond schemes appeared frustrated. Those very means which were intended to strengthen the ties of friendship, seemed instead to have torn them wide asunder.

'Tis plain—the favour of the calif is withdrawn from Giafar, and a servile and envious court look with a cold eye upon him, who but now seemed to stand upon the topmost pinnacle of fortune. They thought him degraded and disgraced. They thought that if he basked not in the sunshine of royal favour his hours must needs be cold and comfortless, and they pitied and slighted him. Thus the poor savage reasons. The brightness of the sun he fancies is extinguished in the depths of ocean when he withdraws his rays from his own narrow horizon; and knows not that they still enlighten a magnificent and glorious universe.

Though deprived of the friendship of his master, and secluded from the gayety of the court, yet, in the sweet retirement of his home, Giafar found peace and uninterrupted joy. Within its hallowed

precinct, the cares, the fears, the feverish anxieties of the busy world dared not intrude. The stern coldness of his master, and the chilling indifference of hollow-hearted friends, were here alike shut out and forgotten; here, at least, in the presence of his bride, his own Abassa, the young prince was happy. Little to him were light and favour, but as they shone forth upon him from beneath the lids of her bright eyes; little were mirth and joy, though heard it might be in tones of softest music, or the glad sounds of many mirthful friends, unless her dear voice echoed near him in its thrilling melody. The air was heavy, and the bird's note sad, heaven's brightness dim, the sky cheerless, when she was absent; and with her the season had no storms, earth no sorrows, fortune no frowns that could disturb him. All his gloomiest anticipations vanished then, and all his cares were amply compensated by the dear delight which her presence shed continually upon him.

What a strange pleasure is it to be near the one we love! hour after hour, day after day to watch her. To listen to that voice sounding its music on the soul—to gaze with timid eyes upon a face so dear—to touch perchance a hand that trembles to our own, while the strange thrill that vibrates through the frame proves us we are not "clay." To scan together with affected care some book or jewel which the rapt senses heed not—when the bright locks are mingling with our own, sweet heralds, that tell us that a brow or cheek is

near, which yet we dare not press. What magic is there in the heart by which we know when eyes we love are gazing on us, that tells us whose step it is advances, although the fairy feet are yet unseen ?

But the festivities which ensued upon the nuptials are scarcely over, when the heats of summer drive the wealthy and luxurious into the inviting retreats of the neighbouring country. The Commander of the Faithful departs for Raccah, his favourite residence on the river Euphrates, and Giafar with his bride leaves the city, to pass the summer months at his gardens on the banks of the Tigris.

Circassia's fairest flowers are blooming in the harem of the bridegroom, but they have no charms for him. Music and the echoing dance resound merrily through the palace halls, yet Giafar heeds them not. Love led, he daily bends his steps to the private gardens of his palace. There, verdant trees spread their shade and fragrant shrubs diffuse their perfume throughout the air. Fountains sounding "sweeter than a well-tuned lute," pour around their murmuring waters, and singing birds are heard breathing their sweet notes in the groves. Beneath the feet a carpet of flowers is spread; every breeze shakes them from the drooping boughs, and scatters them widely around. "Beautiful butterflies are seen whirling through the air, like rose leaves driven by the wind."

The Tigris rolls its waters at one extremity of the garden, where, as though it would encroach upon a spot so delightful, it had formed a small bay, or slight indentation in the shore. Here the gentler waters retiring from the rude current of the river, seemed to lave and caress that sweet bank, near which its enamoured waves would fain have lingered. Naught is seen but one bright, one perfect picture; every breath is odour, every sound is music. Paradise seems here to display its paths, and invite the feet to wander through its delightful mazes. Yet did they wind through a trackless and interminable desert, with no less pleasure and alacrity would Giafar have trod them, for here, at the selfsame hour, daily walks the princess of his soul.

A beautiful kiosk, built upon the river's edge, was, by tacit consent, their place of meeting. Vast pillars of porphyry sustained its roof, the spaces between which were built up with white marble, curiously carved, and reaching breast high, thus forming a sort of parapet over which one might lean and look down into the current below. From this to the gilded roof close lattice-work surrounded the building, by which, during the heat of the day, the sun's rays were excluded, yet through which Zephyr, if he whispered ever so gently without, found a ready entrance.

Perfumed lamps were here continually burning, and odours of all climes greeted the ravished senses. A flight of steps descended to the ground,

and led the way to a suite of subterranean chambers, consisting of baths, and apartments replete with every oriental luxury. Slaves were in attendance here below, but they were invisible, and their duties seemed performed by the ready hands of obedient genii.

Here, in this delightful pavilion, the princess, after the completion of her domestic and religious duties, was wont to seclude herself. Here were her lute, her books, her flowers, and here she was sure to see one who was dearer to her than all these combined. Here, when the sun shone warmly at noon, refreshed by the breeze, or by the cool evaporation from the river's surface, they read, or talked, or sang. When evening came, the moon was welcomed through the opened lattice, and leaning forth, they gazed upon the heavens, and spoke of its beauties, its inhabitants, of the angels that dwell in every little star, vainly wishing they might inhabit one together. When they looked upward upon the smiling scene, they seemed content; yet when they gazed upon the stream below, hurrying swiftly by them, at that vivid emblem of their own fleeting happiness, they wept. Even this, however, was pleasure to them; for who knows not how sweet it is to fear, to tremble, and to weep with one we love?

When the face of night darkened and frowned, they withdrew from her chilling aspect, and forgetting her inconstancy, by the light of faithful lamps pursued their pleasures. Ofttimes soft music from

the river's edge, chosen by the exquisite taste of the prince, soothed and delighted them, as if the peris and genii of the waters were chanting to them from their deep homes. Thus passed the hours. But little was wanting to complete their happiness. And who below the skies can boast of unalloyed felicity? Ofttimes 'tis a small thing mars our joys. Does not the annoying insect disturb repose in the delightful garden, where nature is at peace, and whispers it to mortals?

One bright evening they were looking forth together from their favourite retreat. Night had clothed herself in loveliness. Stars, bright as the eyes which were gazing on them, shone in the heavens, and a mild moon held her course far above them. Beneath were the same heavens distinctly reflected in the Tigris.

All was still, except the bulbul with his sweet note complaining near them, and the roses hung their heads and blushed as they listened to his song. The breeze from the adjacent meadows wafted to them the odour of its wild heather, and the sweet-scented henna flowers sent up their fragrance from the vases in the garden beneath. Above these, however, the perfume of the rose was easily distinguishable; and in such profusion was its fragrance diffused around, that the song of the poet seemed divested of its hyperbole, and "the dew of night was changed into rose water ere it fell to earth."

They had been long looking upon this scene of

beauty, and talking with mutual delight of a thousand topics which readily presented themselves to their minds, when their conversation took gradually a melancholy turn. They spoke of their future fate, and of the many chances which might separate them—of their present happiness, and of their fears lest it might soon be dissipated—dreading even the most remote contingencies lest they should bring them sorrow. At last Giafar proposed to cast the horoscope of their future fate.

“Let us inquire of the heavens,” he said, “which seem so to smile upon us, whether, indeed, they do not threaten misfortune and misery. Even the stars, my life, are deceitful.”

“I could weep to hear it,” answered the princess. “I have been fancying that truth dwelt in them, and wishing that this earth was as pure and happy as all seems to be above. Why did you undeceive me? But do they indeed frown upon us, Giafar? They seem to smile most sweetly. I would I knew it not.”

“Nay, my life, I know not that they portend us ill. Perchance our fate is written there above, in lines as bright and cheering as their own beams. I will look at the Ephemerides, and in a moment—”

“Nay, do not,” interrupted Abassa; “why should we wish to know the future? Let us be content that at present we are happy.”

“True, true,” replied the prince, somewhat sadly, and as he spoke he bent his head, and im-

printed a kiss upon her hand which he had before taken, and had held for some time enclosed in his. A rebuking look and word chid him for his fault, yet the fair hand was not withdrawn, although he held it lightly between his own.

Suddenly her eyes were attracted by a bright shooting star. "Look ! look ! see there !" It was gone. "What should that teach us, Giafar ?" she said, turning towards him, after a moment's silence, and withdrawing the hand which he still detained in his.

"I know not, dearest," was the reply ; "what lesson wouldst thou draw from it ?"

"Caution," replied Abassa. "How watchful are the angels that stand as sentinels above ! When some evil spirit approaches the confines of those happy regions, listening to the converse of its blessed inhabitants, bright arrows¹³ are quickly darted at him ; and, ere he can catch one sound that is uttered, he is driven away, pursued by a shining flame. See ! again !" she exclaimed, as the same phenomenon was for an instant again visible.

"True, light of mine eyes," answered the prince, in a strain of gayety, which he hoped would enliven her despondency ; "they should well watch who guard paradise."

"And from evil spirits," she rejoined, taking for an instant a lightsome tone ; then relapsing into her former melancholy, she continued : "But give not a meaning to my words that they deserve not, and do not think with jest and laughter to dispel the

sadness that hangs over me. I cannot be mirthful to-night."

"Here is thy lute," said the prince, offering to her one that was near them—"take it, wilt thou not? Take it, and sing sorrow away; it will vanish when it hears thy voice."

"I cannot frame my lips to song," replied Abassa: "but do thou touch the strings and I will listen to thee delighted. Let it be something sad," she continued, as the prince prepared to comply with her request. "Thou canst not dispel my gloom; try to sooth and sweeten it."

Giafar then, accompanying his voice with great taste upon the instrument, sang a few verses expressive of the inconstancy of fortune, and of the power of mutual love to render mortals proof against its frowns. When the song was ended, the prince perceived that her cheek was wet with tears, and after a short prelude, he sang the following stanzas:—

"She was near me! Her tresses covered my brow—her sweet breathing warmed my cheek, and I said, 'Is it the west wind that brings with it so pleasant an odour, having passed over a meadow strewn with fragrant flowers, where the fire of Heaven has burned the sweet-scented aloe wood? or is it a caravan laden with musk from Khoten that is at hand?'"

"'Tis beautiful!" said the princess, blushing—"but I will no longer listen to thee."

"I will sing yet again," was Giafar's reply, as

he endeavoured to detain her in an affectionate embrace. She started from his arms, however, saying, "I cannot hear thee to-night," and approaching the door of the apartment, clapped her hands, when a slave entered, bearing a tray covered with fruits, sherbets, and various delicacies. Of these they partook slightly, intermingling their repast with mirthful or sad discourse, smiling or sighing, as the last thought prompted them—then committing each other to Allah's keeping for the night, they reluctantly parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

Oh weep not, lady, weep not so !
Some ghostly comfort seek,
Let not vain sorrow rive thy heart,
Nor tears bedew thy cheek.

Old Ballad.

Thus passed the days. But happiness is fleeting. Time flies bringing sorrow. The prince's temper has become fitful and varied. A frown is always on his brow, and each day he loses some part of that evenness of spirit which he once possessed in a degree so remarkable. His friends, his favourite servants, experience the effects of this change, and wonder at his harshness. He visits seldom that favourite kiosk, he seems rather to fear than covet

its sweet and hallowed retirement, as though a fair demon tenanted the spot to charm him to his ruin.

He walks often by Abassa's side, pensive and sad, and often starts suddenly away to wander in the most secluded walks of his gardens. But the image of his wife follows him ; he cannot be alone, he cannot rest. Her charms haunt his imagination, and like a steel arrow in his soul, disturb and madden him. He pours wine into the cup, and quaffs deeply of its unhallowed current ; yet though he may forget himself, he cannot drown the remembrance of her beauty, or cease, even for a moment, to think of her, who has thrown a chain of love around him, and holds him captive therein. He seeks amid the wit and beauty of his harem to find those whom he may love, and endeavours in the society of his beautiful slaves to forget her. It is in vain. A moment of pleasure, of mirth is passed, and then follow the slowly rolling hours, which are spent in thoughts of her.

Abassa, too, is sad. She looks for him who is her hope, her happiness, but he is no longer near to cheer and delight her. She seeks their loved retreat, where she was ever wont to find him, but he is not there. That dear chamber seems a wilderness. Her flowers wither. Her lute is unstrung ; its rich music slumbers upon its loosened chords. Her heart is like the desert, as desolate and as burning—burning with a warm love ; ay, and another restless, torturing passion, is lighting up its young fires in her bosom. Her soul sinks

within her as she thinks upon the fair forms that are imprisoned in the gay harem. "Ah, that he were here!" she would often murmur, "that he were now smiling upon me. And yet, perhaps, 'tis better thus—better that he should be away. If he were gone afar, upon some mission for my father, or to the wars—Heaven shield him!—I tremble while I think upon it—I should be happier, more content than now; but to know him near me, and yet so seldom see him—to fear, too, alas! what now I fear." A frown, with something of anger in it, gathers upon her brow, and the quick crimson hurries into her cheek. But this soon passes, and her face resumes its patient sadness.

The colour upon her cheek has slightly faded; her rounded form has lost somewhat of its fulness, and her once buoyant step has become slow and languid. Yet is her beauty softened, not diminished, and the sweetness of her spirit is in nowise altered. Complaint is written in her countenance, yet she speaks it not. She seems an angel, wearied with sorrows, silently looking into the face of Heaven her reproaches. This change in the spirits and appearance of Abassa did not escape the observation of the good Ibrahim, for she visited him often, and he tried frequently to encourage and console her. She had not imparted her sorrows to him, as she was wont, yet he readily divined their nature; and approached with care a task, which he felt to be so difficult and delicate.

In one of their interviews, the old man strove

with all his skill and kindness to cheer her melancholy. They were walking together in the grove of palm trees which grew at the foot of the mountain, the spot where she had heard from Giafar's lips the first avowal of his love ; where, too, she had told him, with a sweet and expressive look, the secret which she had treasured up in her own heart. There was the little lake, with its tributary fountains, hurrying with the same soft murmur into its bosom. The palm trees were still waving in the wind, the dates were, as then, hanging in ripe clusters upon their lofty branches. The birds were as happy and their song as melodious. The good dervish was standing before her, nothing altered. Everything around reminded her of that long-past yet well remembered interview. She looked for a moment, half expecting to see the prince advance to complete the scene. Her thoughts soon reverted to her present condition, and she wept. How was she changed ; health, heart, temper, all changed, and becoming each day more feeble, fitful, and capricious. The prince, too, where was he ? where was he now ? She turned her head, thinking to hide her tears, but not so soon as to escape the notice of the dervish. "Thou art weeping, my daughter," he said ; "why dost thou grieve ?"

"This scene, father, brings to my mind the past," replied the maiden, endeavouring to subdue her emotion. "I did weep—yes, a few tears—why should I conceal them ?—for departed hours. Hast thou never done this ?"

"I have regretted time misspent; I have wept over its loss, and have wished to recall it, that I might better employ its hours."

"But did you never grieve for happiness that has flown? Do you not, at times, lament the loss of some bright moments, when joy was ever at hand, when pleasure shed its sweet influence upon every hour?"

"Happiness never deserts the innocent," replied the dervis. "Yon birds, how gay and joyous are they!"

"And wherefore should they not be so?" answered the princess. "The air is free to them. Nature offers all her bounty to their enjoyment."

"'Tis the reward of innocence, my daughter. They who err not are always at peace. Many are there in this busy world, who might receive a useful lesson, would they but listen to the song of those happy warblers, and ponder upon their sinless existence."

"I would I were a bird," exclaimed Abassa, sighing heavily as she spoke.

"Thou errest, daughter, in thy wish. Why shouldst thou envy them? They have no hope beyond the present hour, no promise of felicity that can never end. But thou art unhappy. Some secret grief weighs heavily upon thy spirit. Is it not so?"

"I unhappy, father?" answered the maiden, evading, though she scarce knew why, the old man's scrutiny. "Have my lips breathed a murmur?"

has my tongue uttered aught that could lead thee to think this?"

"Do not deny me thy confidence," replied the dervis, somewhat reproachfully. "Yet thou canst not deceive me. I read that in thy sad countenance which thy lips refuse to tell. I look not to thy words. One who has lived his fourscore years, in the varied scenes which are this world's portion, heeds not the tongue, but regards closely the cheek that is daily growing pale, the eye that is saddening, and the youthful form that fast fades. I have seen these long in thee. I have noted, too, the sighs that often heave thy bosom, and the tears—nay, they are now glistening in thine eyes. Hide not thy sorrows from me. Thou hast those which thou wouldst fain conceal, but keep them no longer from one who in truth loves thee. My counsel may cheer and support thy spirit."

"Thou art right," answered Abassa. "Sorrow has indeed laid its hand upon me. But tell not of it. I would hide it from him—I would hide it from all the world. But how have I merited this grief?" continued the maiden. "Answer me, father. If, as thou sayst, the innocent are always happy, of what dark crime have I been guilty, that I should be thus wretched?"

"If of none other, yet of this, my daughter: thou hast failed of confidence in Heaven. Thou hast not given up thy hopes into the hands of Him who will of a surety protect and strengthen those who repose alone upon his goodness. Thou shouldst

not yield up thy firmness, but wait in patience for a happier season to arrive."

"I am a woman, father, weak and helpless. Blame me not, then, but teach me to support my sorrows."

The old man looked upon her for a moment, with something approaching to wonder in his countenance, as the maiden thus avowed her grief, and then answered,

"Be not thus overcome. The trial which is now bending thy spirit beneath its weight may not long endure. Changing events may soon bring peace to thy bosom. Thy father may repent him of his stern decree, and all happiness with him thou lovest may be thine."

At these words the princess started, as if in surprise and uncertainty; her brow crimsoned, and she seemed about to speak, but the dervis continued,

"Arm thyself with fortitude, my daughter. Shake off, as ill befitting thine honour and thy pride, the dominion of those emotions which threaten to destroy thy peace."

The princess turned an inquiring gaze upon the face of the old man, as though she would read his most secret thoughts; then, as she seemed to gather more clearly the purport of his words, an indignant flush passed across her features, and in a tone of dignity and wounded pride, tempered, indeed, by respect and affection, she replied,

"Father, I have known thee long and loved thee

well. I have sought thee, when sorrow and affliction have come nigh me. I have ever listened to thy counsel with delight, and never till now has aught fallen from thy lips which sounded harshly upon mine ear. But now thy words are strange and ill advised. Nay, listen to me. I will speak freely to thee, for thou hast been a father to my youth. I will not question thy love or thy wisdom—but know, if there be aught in thy thoughts unworthy of me, or of the husband of my love—ay, and of thyself, too, father—thou hast widely erred.”

“Pardon me, my child. Forgive the eager care of an old man. It was my purpose to console and strengthen thee.”

“I think no more of it. But hear me. I thought not to impart my grief to mortal. I have oft breathed it to Heaven, whence alone I look for relief, but since thou hast thus misjudged me, thou shalt know all. He loves me no longer!”

She paused, the tears came into her eyes, and the dervis exclaimed,

“Of whom dost thou speak?”

“Of Giafar—of my husband,” was the reply. “I see him seldom now. His presence no more cheers my solitude. His heart is estranged from me; there are others more dear to him than his wife—than I. If my face is pale, it is for this—it is for this I sigh; and if the hot and bitter tears scald my cheek as they fall, it is through grief for his lost love.”

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"Believe it not. It cannot be," replied the dervis. "I know thy husband well. I know that his heart is thine, that thou alone hast power over his soul, and that power is wide and unlimited."

"Why, then, tell me, why is he ever from me? Why does he linger in the harem, there, where the fairest of the land are grouped together, and leave me weeping at his absence?"

"Is this so, indeed?" exclaimed the old man. "Is it for this thou grievest?"

"Even for this," replied Abassa. "And is not this enough? What loss more sad could befall me? I love him, I shame me not to confess. But have I bestowed upon him my warmest affection, to see it thrown aside as a thing worthless and despised? I have given him my heart, and his caprice and neglect have pierced it to the core. I meant not to speak thus to thee. These sorrows are mine alone, and I would share them with no one. Speak not to me. Let me weep. Yet no," she exclaimed—here the natural pride of the princess's character broke forth, her cheek coloured, and her eye flashed its fires—"I will not weep. I *would* weep for him, if danger or distance separated us; if death threatened, I would die for him; but I will think no longer of one who has forsaken and forgotten me."

"Be not thus disturbed," said the old man. "Thou art deceived in thy thoughts of thy husband's affection. He still loves thee tenderly—nay,

'tis that very love which keeps him from thy presence. His wishes for thy welfare and thy peace alone drive him from thy side, and make him seem forgetful of thee. Do not doubt my words. I have seen him often of late, and he is as sad and careworn as thyself."

"Does sorrow indeed disturb his bosom as it does mine own? Does he sigh thus bitterly, and weep? Yet no—tears fall not upon the cheek of man, even when the keenest pangs are rending his soul. But he—is he sad? is he silent?"

"He is as I have never seen him till now. He does not weep, as thou sayst, but his brow is ever clouded by care and anxiety; he is insensible to those pleasures which till now have well delighted him; the beauties of the sky and field, mine own poor converse, which once had influence over his soul, is lost upon him. He wanders in solitude, alone, tracking the sand with restless and unsteady steps, and seems rather to avoid than seek my presence. Even as I speak, I see him passing among the trees of yonder grove."

The dervish, as he said this, pointed to a group of cypress and palm trees, that grew in a cluster, at some distance from the cell. There, as he had said, was Giafar, walking at an irregular pace beneath the shade. His arms were crossed upon his bosom, and at times his hands were pressed quickly, and with apparent violence against his brow. He paused for a moment, leaning his head against a cypress, and then hurried quickly upon his path

his steps becoming gradually more and more slow, until he became, as though unconsciously, motionless ; then starting with an air of abstraction, he buried himself hurriedly in the recesses of the grove.

"Thou seest, my daughter," said the old man, who had followed him with his finger, until he had passed from their sight. "Is it not as I have told thee?"

The princess had watched, with an intent gaze, the gloomy and restless walk of her husband. The pride and anger which had for a moment been roused in her bosom vanished ; the crimson with which they had suffused her face disappeared, and tears came into her eyes, marking her sympathy and sorrow. "It is so," she exclaimed. "Yet why?—yet why—" and she wept still more profusely.

"Ask not, my daughter. His griefs, it may be, are bitter as thine own. Add not, then, thy sorrows to the weight of those which already oppress his bosom. Let him not see thee weep thus. Let him not think that thou too art sad. This would give tenfold sharpness to the arrows that are rankling in his soul."

"Why should it be thus, father? Why should he shut his bosom against all sympathy from one he loves? and why should not I, if I have grief, share it with him. This would prove a solace to us both. We were happy once—a few short days have scarce passed, since I esteemed my lot most fortunate, and fondly thought that fortune could not snatch from me my joy, save in parting me

from him. Then, all pleasures that this earth could offer seemed mine, and he partook them with me. His presence lent a charm to every hour, and rendered every enjoyment doubly pleasing. If care intruded its unwelcome presence upon our peaceful joys, ere it could cast a gloom upon our hearts, 'twas banished by his sweet words and smiles. Wherefore should not these days return?"

"They may," replied the old man. "Prudence and duty, with a stern hand, are now keeping the prince from thy beloved presence, and that hand holds a cimeter within its grasp. Yet be not discouraged by the prospect of the many evils which await thee on thy journey through this dreary life. Be at peace. When the storm is fiercest, the sunshine may be struggling through the clouds. Above all, cease not to love thy husband, although he for a time deserts thee; cease not to value him as thou oughtest."

"I will do so—ah, yes! Allah, who reads this bosom, alone knows how dear he is to me."

"Well, comfort thee, my child. If in this world some dark clouds intervene between us and that happiness we think should be our own, this is the lot of mortals. Yet it is but for a time. This world is but the threshold, the porch and vestibule unto another, where all sorrows will depart, and happiness, untainted by the frailties of this clay, shall be the lot of the resigned—(Moslem.) Be patient, then. Even if thou dost tarry a while in sorrow here, there thou shalt gain uninterrupted joy. This is a choice that is offered to all; to give

up this world for another and a better. Ponder well upon it then."

"Yes, father, I can wait. Happiness, thou sayst, will come at last."

"Heaven, my daughter, will be the reward of those who, with a humble spirit, support, without a murmur, the grief which the hand of Allah pours down upon their heads. Lay aside thy care: be not overcome by evils, which are but temporary, for one day, every sorrow that thou now hast may be changed into ten thousand joys, and thou wilt but frame a wish, and the highest and purest blessings shall be thine."

"There is one, father, without whom I would not—nay, I could not, be happy even there."

"Sin may sever the nearest ties," replied the old man; "but those who do aright shall dwell together in paradise, and never go out from that blessed abode."

Such consolation would the good old man administer to the trembling and griefworn princess. But all his care seemed to be in vain. Though she listened attentively to his words, and came again and again to hearken to his counsel, yet her sorrows would not be removed. For a short time, after an interview with the dervish, her brow would seem lighter, and her bosom more at ease; but again her griefs would return with redoubled keenness, and though none, save the venerable Ibrahim, knew of their nature, or their depth, yet their influence upon her frame was becoming each day more visible to all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Who that hath felt that passion's power,
Or paused, or feared in such an hour?

PARISINA.

GIAFAR and Abassa were again together in the kiosk. A silver basin of roses freshly culled was near them. "How like thee, my life!" said the prince, gazing fondly upon her.

"There are many here, my lord," replied Abassa, with a mournful smile; "to which of them wouldst thou liken me?"

"Nay, I cannot choose; they are all beautiful."

"Thou comparest me, with truth, Giafar," responded the princess, complainingly, "to a single rose in the group. Why didst thou not rather bring me a solitary flower, and say, 'Behold thyself!' 'Tis ill done, my lord; thou needst not show me my rivals, if I have them."

"Thy rivals!" exclaimed the prince, with ardour. "Thou hast none. Who can compare with thee in beauty and in worth? Look! here is thine emblem," he continued, and having selected the most beautiful rose in the vase, he isolated it from the rest, by inverting over the flower a goblet of glass.

"Nay, this is flattery. Thou hast chosen the loveliest," rejoined Abassa, and bending her head,

as she spoke, over the fragrant group, she inhaled, with an expression of delight, the odour which their leaves emitted.

"Their perfume is indeed pleasant," said the prince; "but why hast thou neglected this, which thou esteemest the loveliest of them all?"

"That one?" replied Abassa. "The goblet encloses it. Its sweetness cannot penetrate beyond that prison of glass."

"Is it not like thee, then?" said the prince. "Art thou not with all thy loveliness enclosed as in a prison from me? Dost thou upbraid me, that I have culled sweet flowers, when the sweetest and the loveliest was beyond my reach? Thy rivals, sayst thou? ah, no! thou art the only rose that I prize; though wherefore should I?" he added, despondingly. "Why should I value a flower when its fragrance is debarred me? Shall it be ever thus? Let me loose the chains that bind thee. Let me free thee, as I set free this flower." As he said this, he struck the goblet with the signet ring which he wore upon his finger, and it fell crushed into many fragments, liberating the imprisoned rose, whose fragrance, collected during its temporary confinement, was wafted quickly to their senses. "Yes, let me free thee," he exclaimed, "and love long repressed shall richly repay our cares!"

"What dost thou mean, Giafar?" said the princess, striving to repress the crimson that was mant-

ling her features. "What dost thou mean? I understand thee not."

"Let me transplant thee to some green spot in the desert, or to one of those remote islands which our Indian pearl divers so often tell of. There thou shalt be mine—alone, and for ever. No care shall come near us, or if it come, love, with its soft hand, shall stay the intruder, and banish him afar. Affection shall wrap us together as in a mantle, and we will not heed, though we may hear, the storm that blows rudely without. Come, wilt thou not? I have wealth sufficient to purchase all the pleasures that this world can offer. And without these, even if daily toil were our portion, together we could not fail of happiness. But oh! what mockery is grandeur when love unblest burns with its sharp fires in the soul!"

Drops fell from the lovely eyes of the princess upon the unconscious flowers. Was it *they* had stolen the colour from her cheek and lips? Something had, for her face was ashy pale, as, turning to her husband, she replied, "Does not the bulbul lament when the rose is torn from its stem? and are there none to weep for me? I have a father and a dear mother; shall I pour the cup of grief into their souls? I cannot—I love them too well. I would go with thee to the desert, or to those distant islands thou speakest of, if they are not fabulous—yes, as our dreams of happiness; but thou knowest, Giafar, that I cannot steal thus away from my parents. I cannot leave them lamenting over a daughter's ingratitude. Thou couldst not

love me if I should. As to my rivals, believe me, I think not of them." A deep flush passed over her face as she spoke. "Forgive me! leave me!"

"Leave thee!" said the prince, drawing her tenderly towards him. "Say not so. I would make thee mine indeed—mine, beyond the rude mandates of thy father's power. Has not the sacred voice of religion and of Heaven bound us together? Why, then, should the breath of man thus sever us?"

"Nay, I will not listen to thee now," she exclaimed, shrinking with strange fear from his embrace. "To-morrow I will hear thee, but oh! not now!"

A frown knit the prince's brow, and approaching a low table which stood near, he poured out a bowl of Shiraz, and quaffed it quickly. He then remained for some moments silent and motionless, with his hand pressed against his forehead. "Nay, set down that goblet," said Abassa, as she saw him about to repeat the draught; "or if thou wilt thus sin, drink of the light Kismische, that will not madden thee, that will not so steep thy senses in forgetfulness."

"I *would* forget—myself, my sorrows, everything, even thee," was Giafar's reply, as he drained to the last drop the sparkling wine. "Thou wilt not listen to me, then, thou sayst?" he proceeded, controlling his emotion by a strong effort; "yet thou wilt, when I tell thee this—I think to leave Bagdad—start not! thou canst not feel it more than I. The future may yet have happiness in

store for us. I will obtain from thy father the government of some distant province, the care of which may occupy my thoughts, and enable me, for a time at least, to forget thee. Yes, I will leave thee a while, until fortune, in its vicissitudes, shall reunite us under happier auspices."

"Leave me! Do not that, Giafar," she exclaimed, in a tone approaching to agony. "Oh! no, no!—you are not so cruel!—you will take me with you!"

"'Tis better for us both that we should part. This strife of passion is wearing upon us both, and imbittering our existence. The colour is fading from thy cheek—thy health and spirits are daily wasting, and for myself to live thus, near thee, is impossible. I will not linger thirsting by the fountain, when I am forbidden to drink of its waters. No, though they be tempting and fair to view, were it the fount Cafur, that flows through paradise. Its stream is spicy and shining, yet to stand upon its margin, wishing, but fearing to drink—'twere a torment worthy the crimes of Eblis—a place deep within his dark dominion, methinks, were better."

"Thou art mad, Giafar!" exclaimed the princess, "thy brain is turned by that accursed draught."

"I feel it not," he replied. "I am not mad!—except to linger here be madness. Said I not, we must part?"

"Yes, but it was in jest—'twas but to try my

love—say that it was so!—I can die, but thou must not leave me! Allah, have mercy on me!—I have life in none but thee,” said the maiden, in an extremity of anguish. “I will do anything. To-night—this moment, I will fly with thee.” She buried her face in her robe and endeavoured to resume her composure. “Ah me! I am a child. I have no constancy, no fortitude, that I should thus desert myself. Yet think well of it, Giafar,” she continued, more calmly. “Shall we not be happier if we return to our old and long-neglected pursuits? Will not reason come once more to strengthen us, and render to us our peace again? Can we not forget—”

“It is impossible,” quickly interrupted the prince. “Love, infinite love, has taken possession of my soul. And, after all, what is the penalty?” he continued, as his arm encircled her trembling form, and his voice assumed a strange sweetness—“what is the penalty? It is not misery, torturing and long to be endured—it is not what we have already suffered. No, it is but death, and that I know thou wouldst welcome with me!” As he said this, the prince pressed for the thousandth time her fair hand to his lips. It was white as the snow upon the mountains, yet not so cold—and soft as the rich silken cushions that were strewn about the chamber, upon one of which knelt Giafar before the trembling, agitated princess. “Is it not so?—wouldst thou not welcome death with me?”

“I would—thou knowest that I would!”

"Be mine, then—be mine!" He drew the half-fainting princess closely to his bosom, while she sighed forth, "Speak not of—nay, speak of nothing to me *now*." Her head drooped helplessly upon his shoulder, and the words, "Wilt thou *not* leave me?" were murmured faintly in his ear.

The spirit of love has descended into the chamber, and is breathing his intoxicating perfume around them. The air is burdened with it. Their sighs, which but a moment since might have been heard leaving their lips, now come heavily from their bosoms, and fail to struggle through the hallowed atmosphere that surrounds them. Their words—yes, there are yet a few—murmured, muttered, sighed—but so low that Echo cannot answer them, or so sacred that she durst not.

* * * * *

Love, watch over thy votaries—keep far away the noiseless step of mute. Let not the prying eyes of Eastern jealousy trespass upon the sanctity of thy reign; for a fearful price must be paid, should suspicion reach the ear of a jealous monarch that his power has been rivalled, his commands annulled, even by a divinity so potent and universal as thine own. Shield and protect, for thou hast betrayed them. Yet if thou canst not guard, thou canst at least console the victims thou hast made.

NOTES

TO THE

FIRST VOLUME.

1. Page 5. See Tavernier's Travels.
2. Page 7. KAABA. *Square building.* According to the tradition of the Mohammedans, first built by Seth, the son of Adam. It was destroyed by the deluge, but was rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael. This temple is the Keblah of all Mussulmen, or the place towards which they turn when they perform their devotions, in whatsoever part of the world they may be.—*See D'Herbelot's Bibliotheque Orientale.*
3. Page 8. SAMSAMAH. A sharp sword. More particularly a celebrated weapon which formerly belonged to a valiant Arab by the name of Amrou, and which afterward came into the hands of the Calif Haroun al Raschid. Amrou sent it to a prince, who complained that it did not the execution he expected. The reply of the owner was, that "he had not sent his arm with the sword."—*D'Herbelot.*
4. Page 39. KEBLAH. See Note 2.
5. Page 43. The reader will find that this scene has been in nowise exaggerated, if he will turn to chapter lii of Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and read the description of an audience given by the Calif Mectader to ambassadors from Constantinople.
6. Page 46. HAGGION ALASSOVAD. A black stone attached to one of the pillars of the porch to the temple at Mecca. Many wonderful qualities are attributed to this stone: to have at times such weight that many oxen and camels cannot move it—at times so light as to float upon water—to fatten a lean camel that carries it, and other fabulous properties.
7. Page 47. For this letter of the Roman or Grecian Emperor to the calif, see Gibbon, ch. lii.

8. Page 52. Such instances of despotism and devotion are not rare in oriental history. It is related of Abu Taher, a Carmathian chief, that having made an inroad into Persia, even to the gates of Bagdad, with no more than 500 horse, and being summoned by an officer from Abussage, the general of the Calif Moc-tader, to surrender, he demanded of the messenger how many troops his master had with him. The officer replied, "Thirty thousand." Abu Taher then made answer, "There are yet wanting to him three such men as mine." Whereupon having commanded three of his followers into his presence, he ordered the first to plunge a poniard into his throat, the second to cast himself headlong into the Tigris, and the third to leap from a precipice. His orders were instantly obeyed. The Carmathian then turned to the officer, and said, "He who has such soldiers counts not the number of his enemies. For thyself I offer thee good quarter; but thou shalt soon see Abussage thy general chained among my dogs." This threat was fulfilled.—*See D'Herbelot.*

9. Page 77. A species of large falcon, bred for taking hares and antelopes.—*Russell's History of Aleppo.*

10. Page 187. This incident is taken from a combat of Ali's, as related, if I mistake not, by D'Ohsson.

11. Page 202. The dervises usually carry rosaries (tesbihs) consisting of one hundred beads, that being the number of the attributes of the Deity. The Mussulmen say that there are ninety-nine most excellent names of the Divinity, which, with that of Allah, make up the number of one hundred. It is customary with them, in their prayers to pronounce aloud these several names or attributes, as they pass the beads one by one through their fingers.—*D'Herbelot.*

12. Page 213. Shooting stars are thought by the generality of Mohammedans to be lightning which is darted by angel watchers at those demons who approach too near the gates of paradise.



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